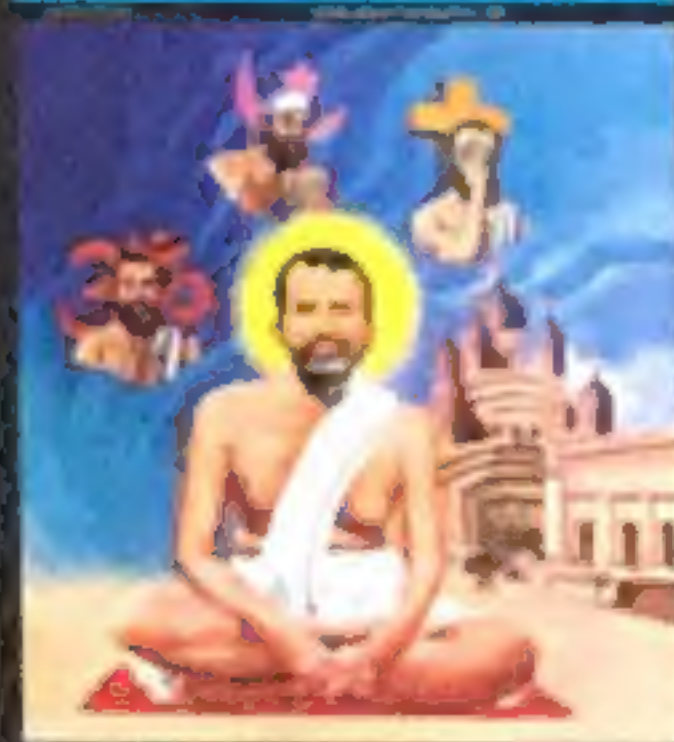


## RAM SHASTRI

Even as a child he was known for his honesty and upright behaviour. Ram Shastri started his life as a servant in a rich household. However, his determination to learn the scriptures caught the attention of the resident priest. It was a long and arduous journey but hard work and determination took him to the position of Chief Justice under the Peshwas of Maharashtra. Respected by his peers, Ram Shastri's sense of justice and fair play, at a time when corruption and nepotism held sway, earned him the love and loyalty of the people.

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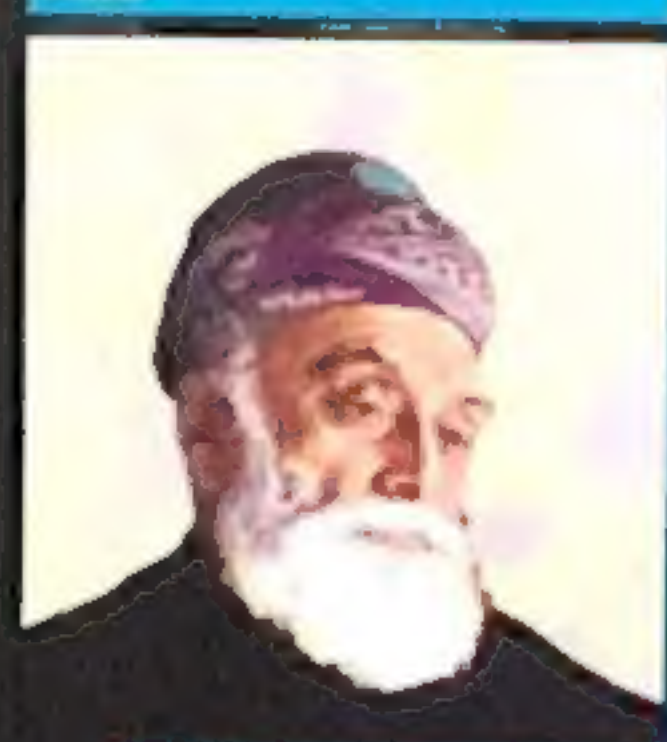
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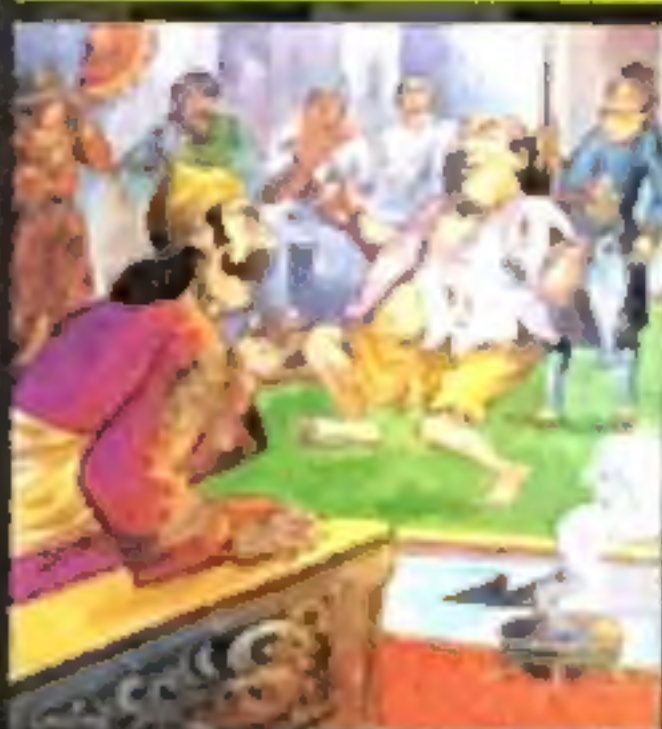
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# RAM SHASTRI

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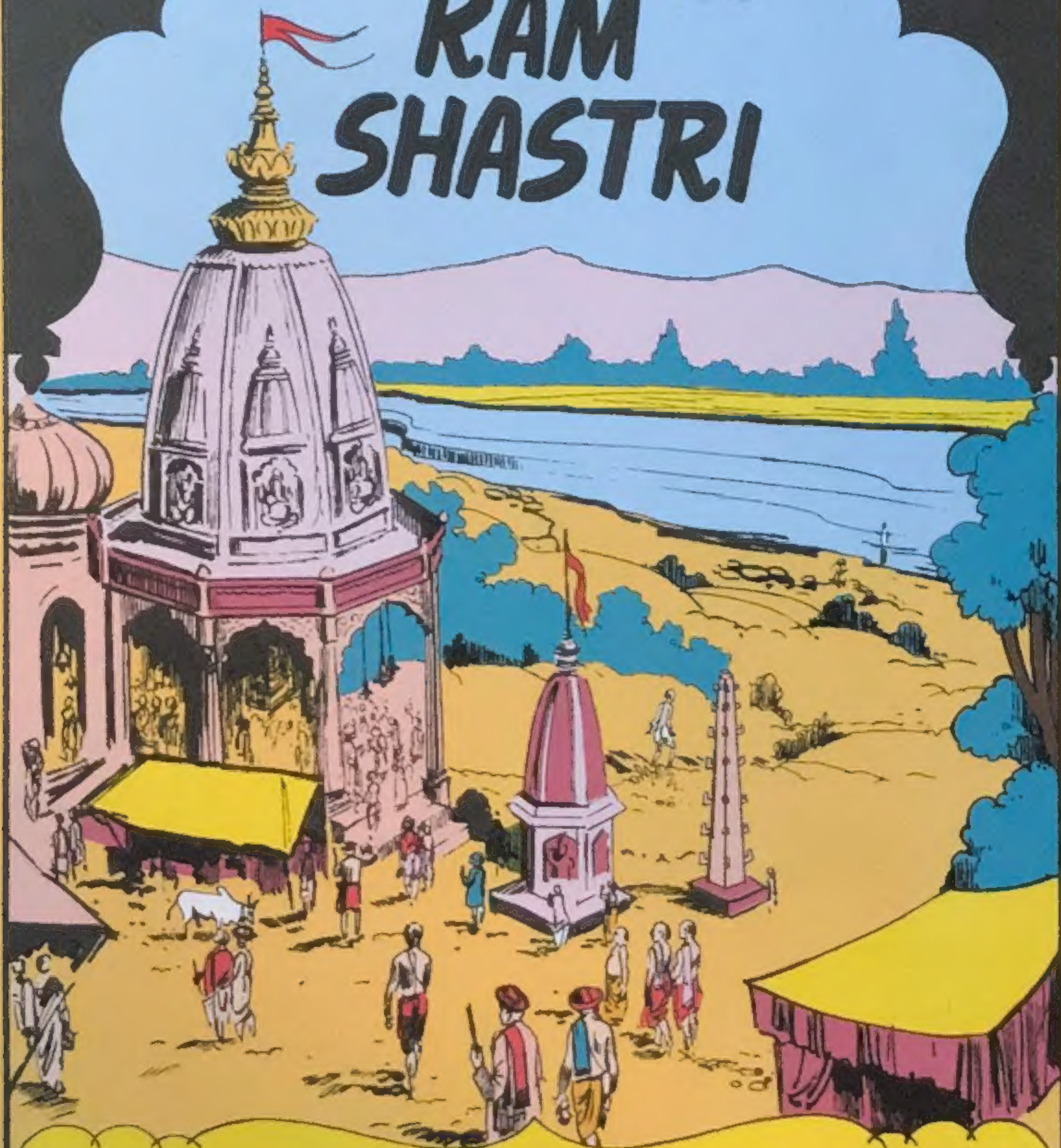
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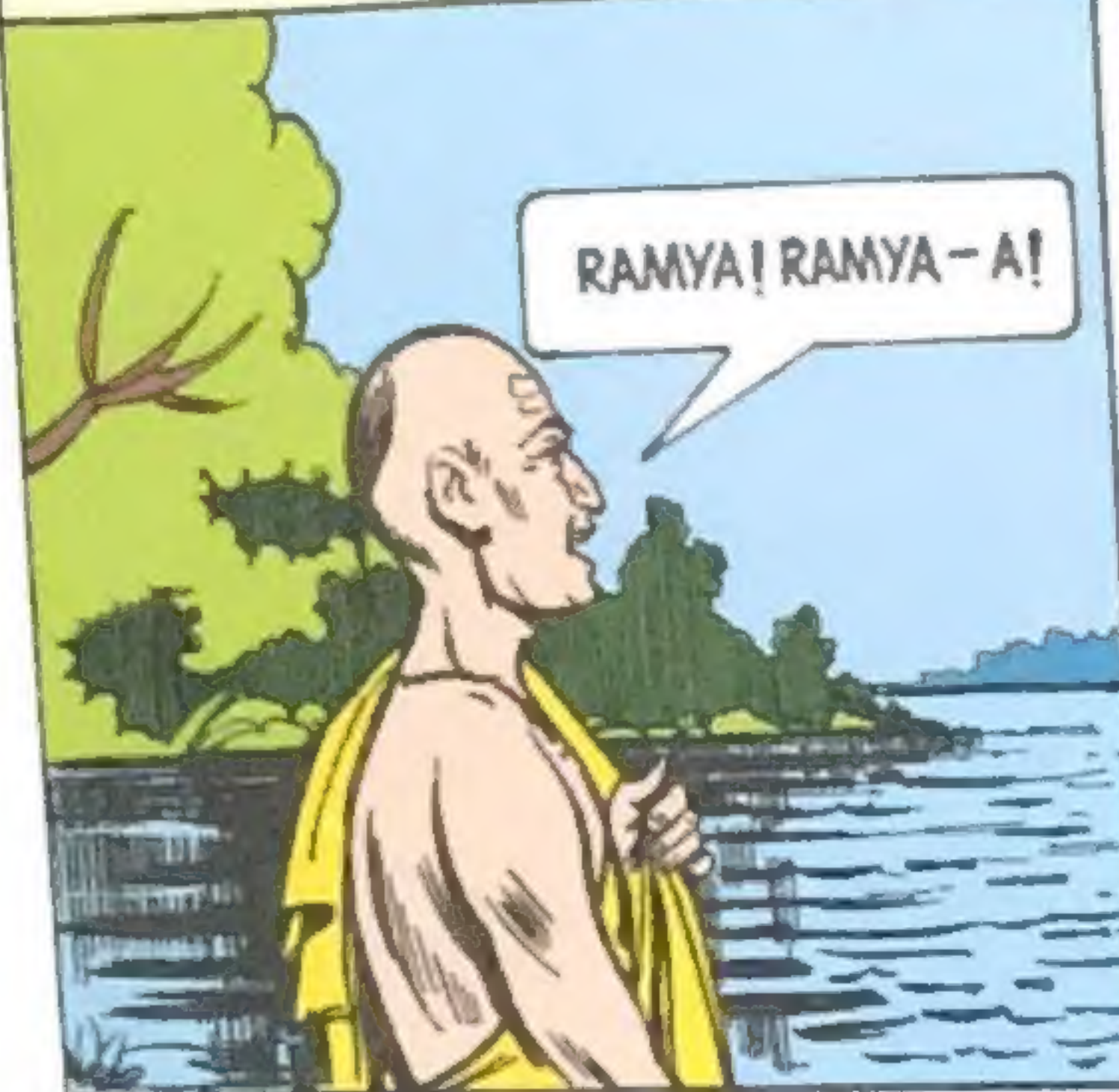
# RAM SHASTRI



THE ANNUAL TEMPLE FESTIVAL WAS IN FULL SWING AT MAHULI KSHETRA IN SATARA DISTRICT, WHERE RAM SHASTRI SPENT HIS EARLY CHILDHOOD. AFTER THE PUJA, DONATIONS WOULD BE GIVEN TO ALL QUALIFIED BRAHMAN STUDENTS AND SCHOLARS PRESENT.



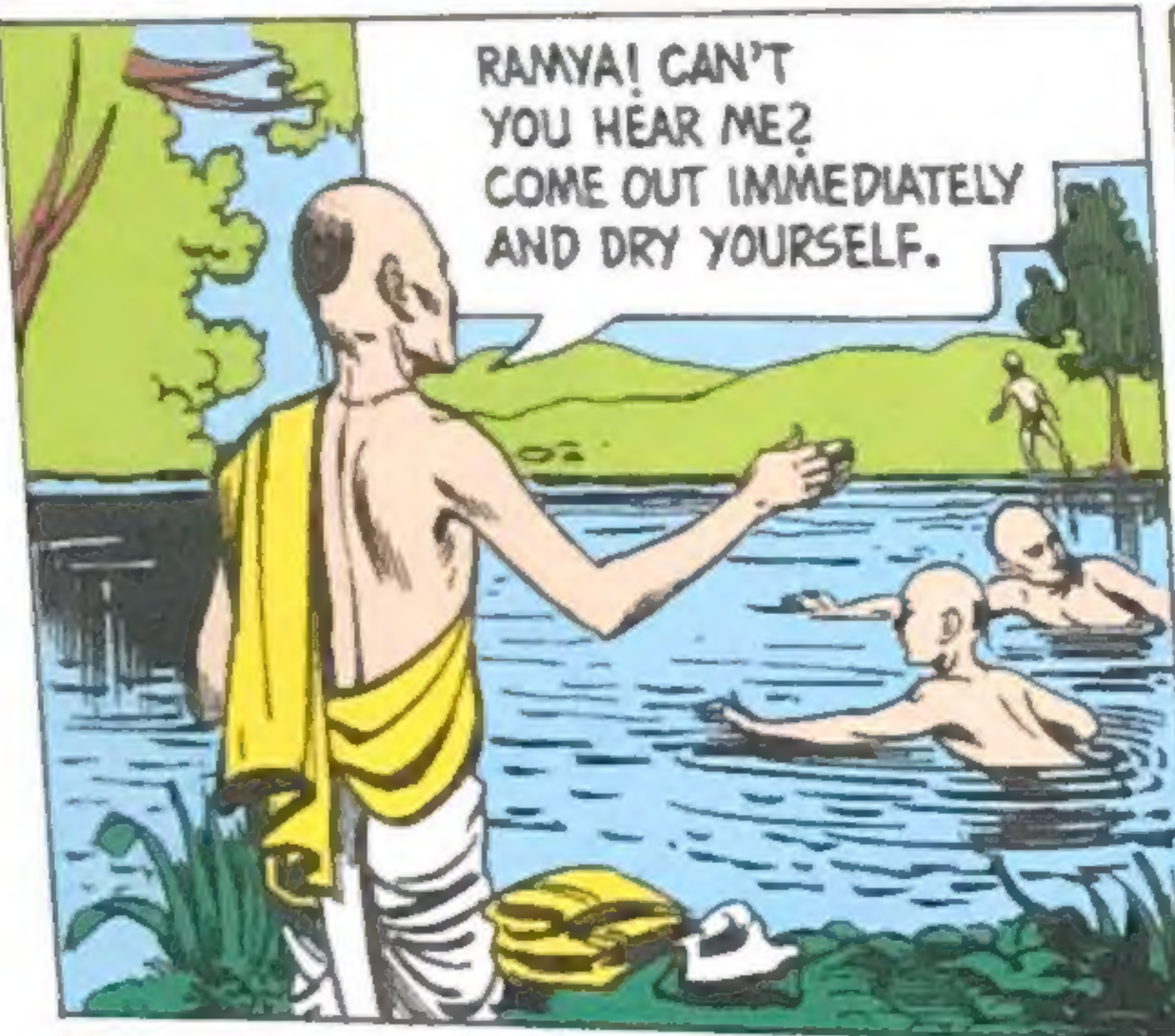
AS THE NOTES OF THE CHANTS ROSE INTO THE AIR—



RAM WAS FROLICKING IN THE WATER AND TEASING HIS MORE SERIOUS PLAYMATES.



RAMYA! CAN'T YOU HEAR ME? COME OUT IMMEDIATELY AND DRY YOURSELF.



RAMYA CLAMBERED ONTO THE BANK.

WHAT'S THE MATTER, UNCLE? HAS ANYTHING HAPPENED?

THE DONATIONS FOR THE BRAHMANS ARE ON. RUN ALONG. GET WHAT YOU CAN.



BUT UNCLE, I AM NEITHER A STUDENT NOR A SCHOLAR.

DON'T ARGUE. DO AS I SAY. AFTER ALL I FEED AND CLOTHE YOU.



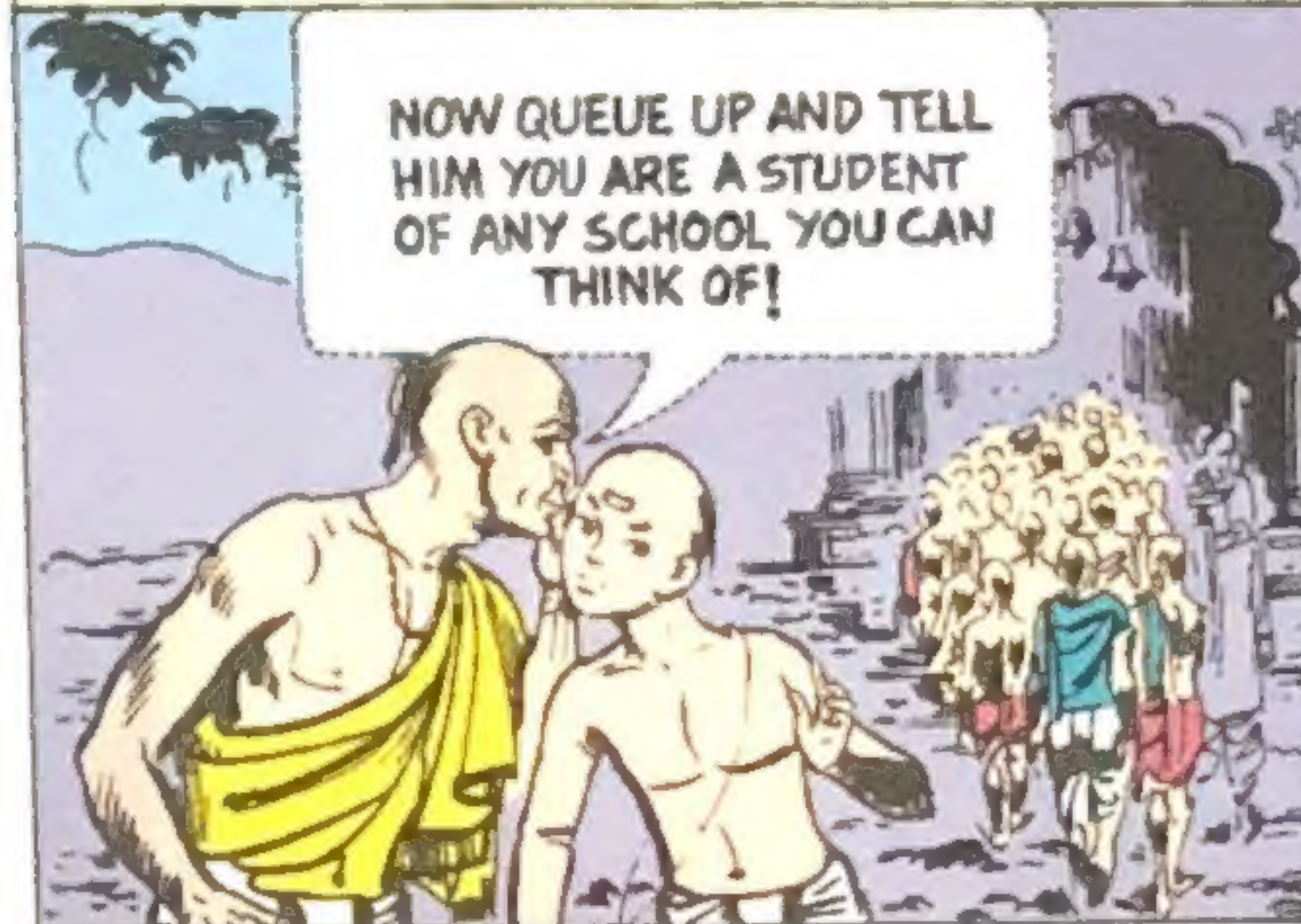
RAM OBEDIENTLY FOLLOWED HIS UNCLE. BUT—

I WILL NOT ACCEPT ANY DONATION! I WILL NOT...



EACH BRAHMIN HAD TO DECLARE HIS CREDENTIALS AND ONLY THEN COLLECT HIS GIFTS.

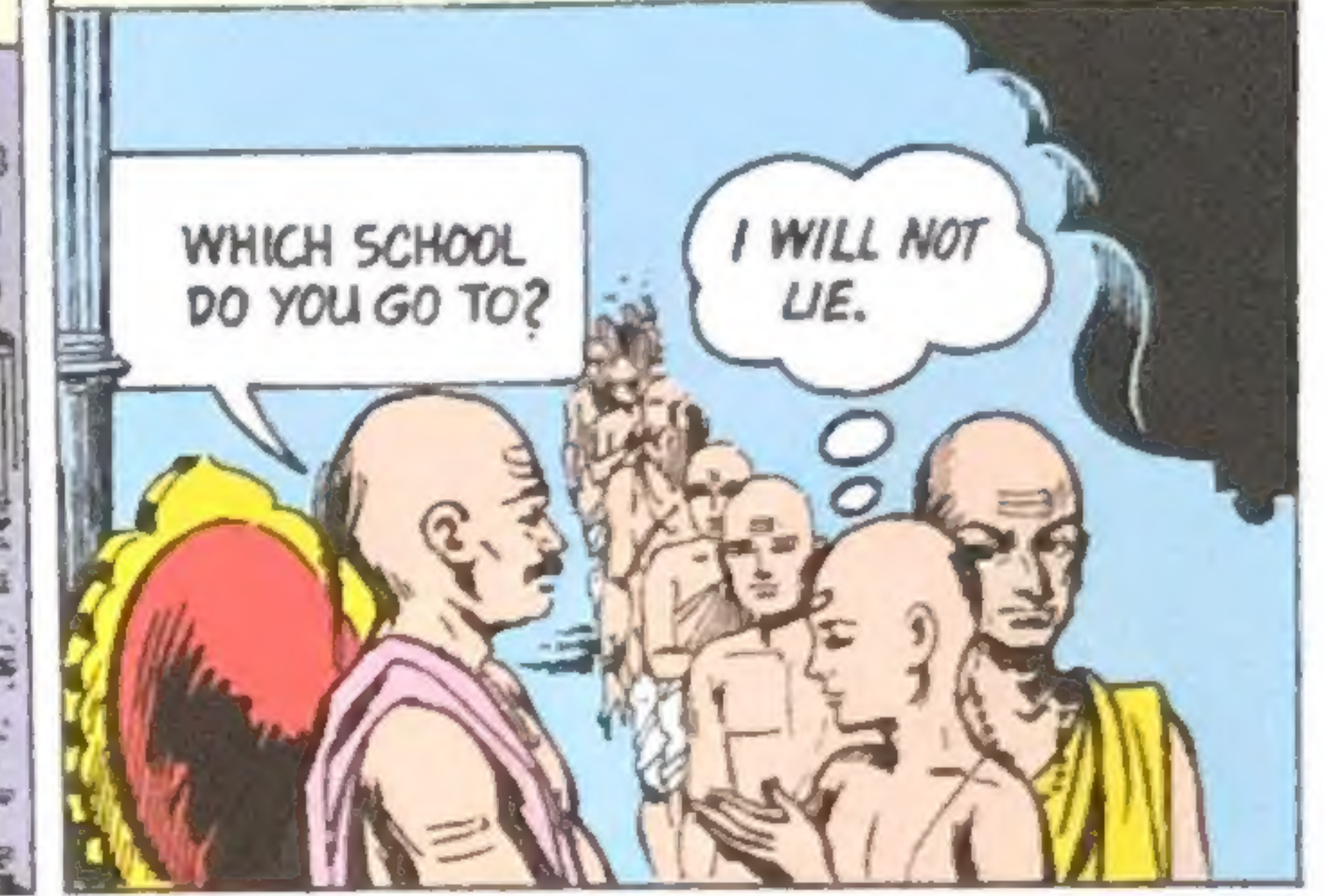
NOW QUEUE UP AND TELL HIM YOU ARE A STUDENT OF ANY SCHOOL YOU CAN THINK OF!



WHEN IT WAS RAM'S TURN—

WHICH SCHOOL DO YOU GO TO?

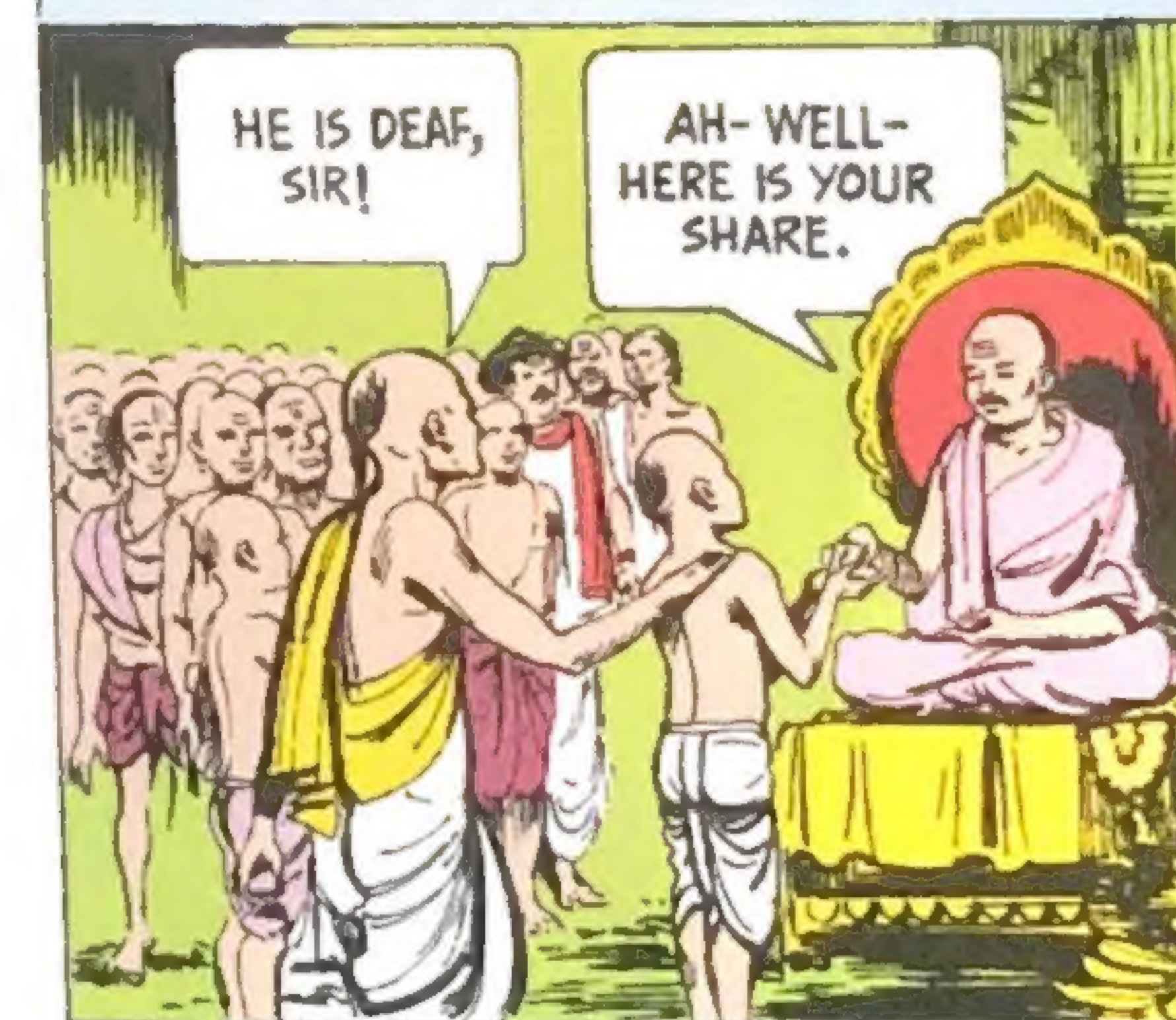
I WILL NOT LIE.



RAM HUNG HIS HEAD IN SHAME, REFUSING TO LIE.

HE IS DEAF, SIR!

AH—WELL—HERE IS YOUR SHARE.



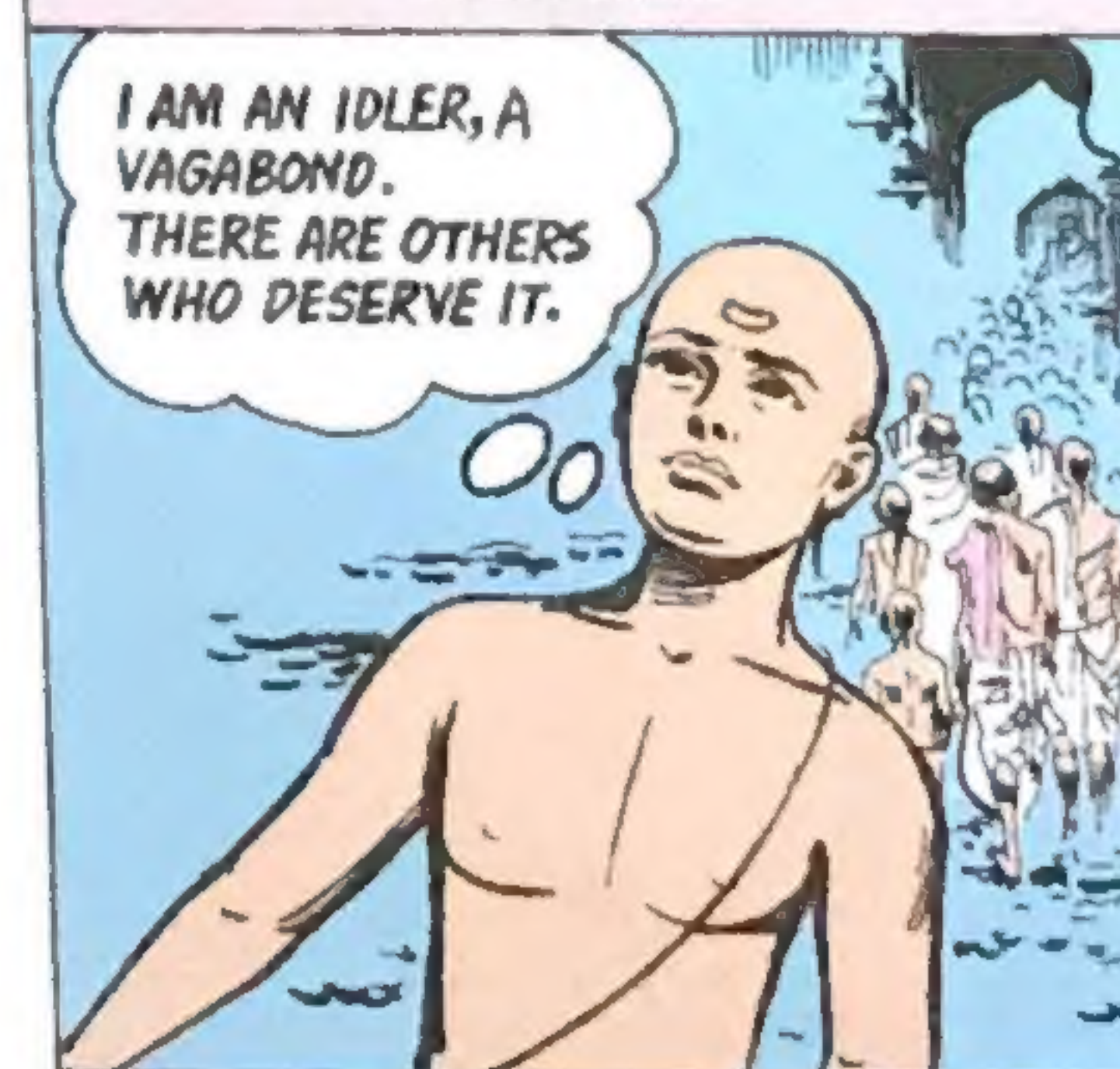
RAM TOOK THE MONEY MECHANICALLY AND WALKED AWAY, UTTERLY MISERABLE.

I HAVE NO RIGHT...

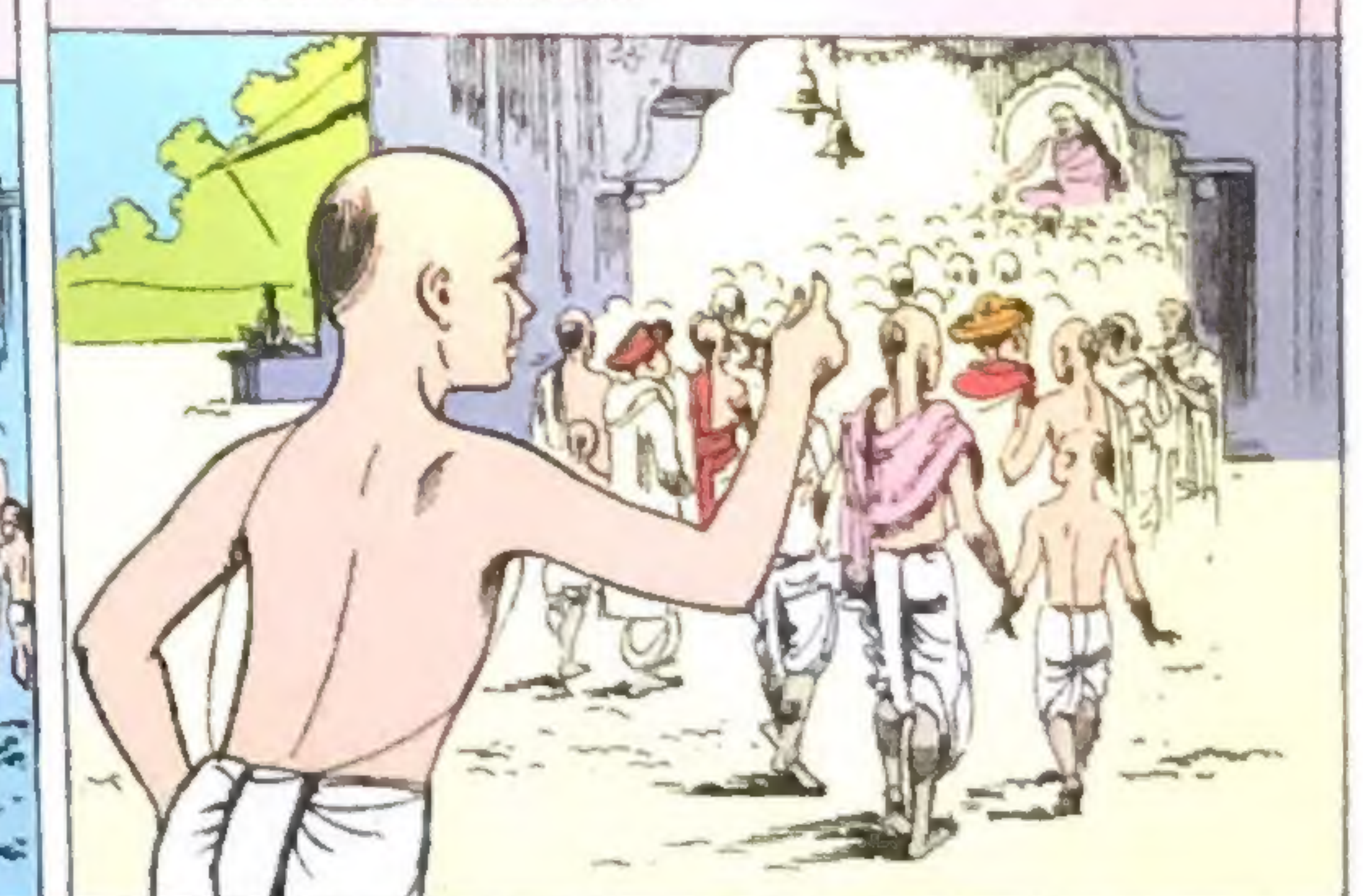


HE HAD NOT COVERED MUCH DISTANCE. THE GUILT OF FALSEHOOD WEIGHED UPON HIM.

I AM AN IDLER, A VAGABOND. THERE ARE OTHERS WHO DESERVE IT.

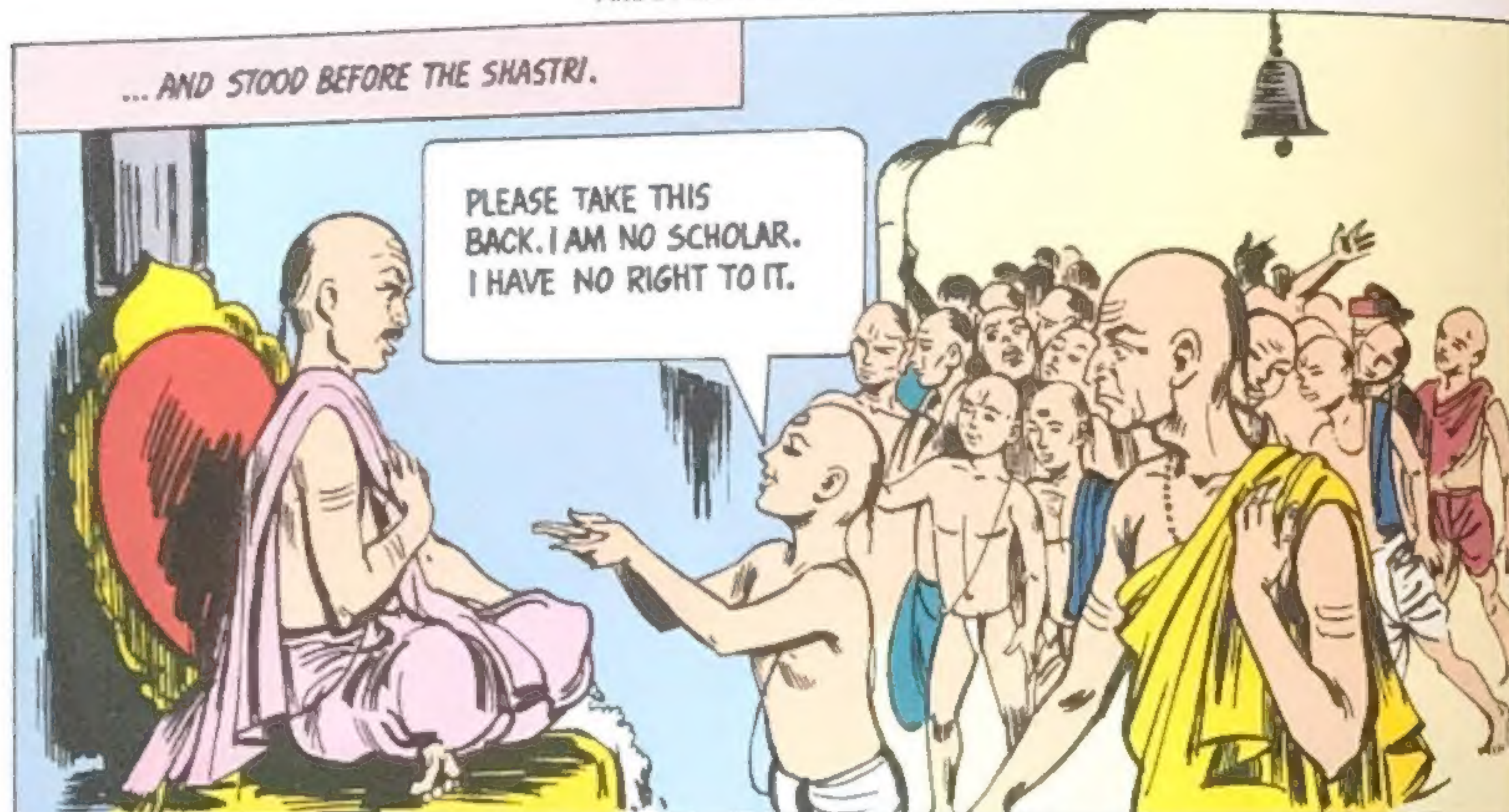


TURNING ON HIS TRACKS, HE PUSHED HIS WAY THROUGH THE CROWDS...





... AND STOOD BEFORE THE SHASTRI.



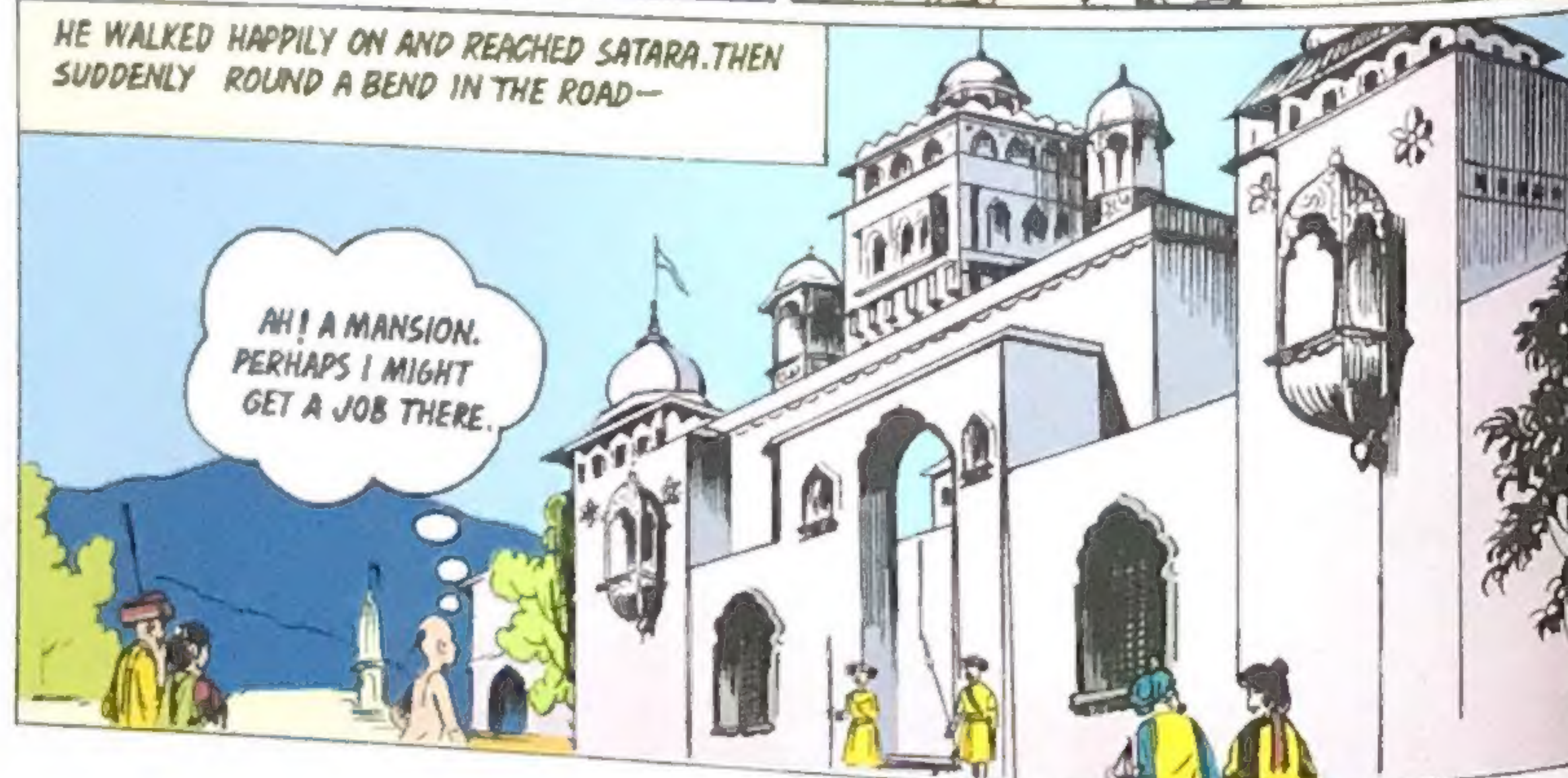
AS HE MADE HIS WAY OUT OF THE CROWDS, HIS UNCLE FOLLOWED HIM.



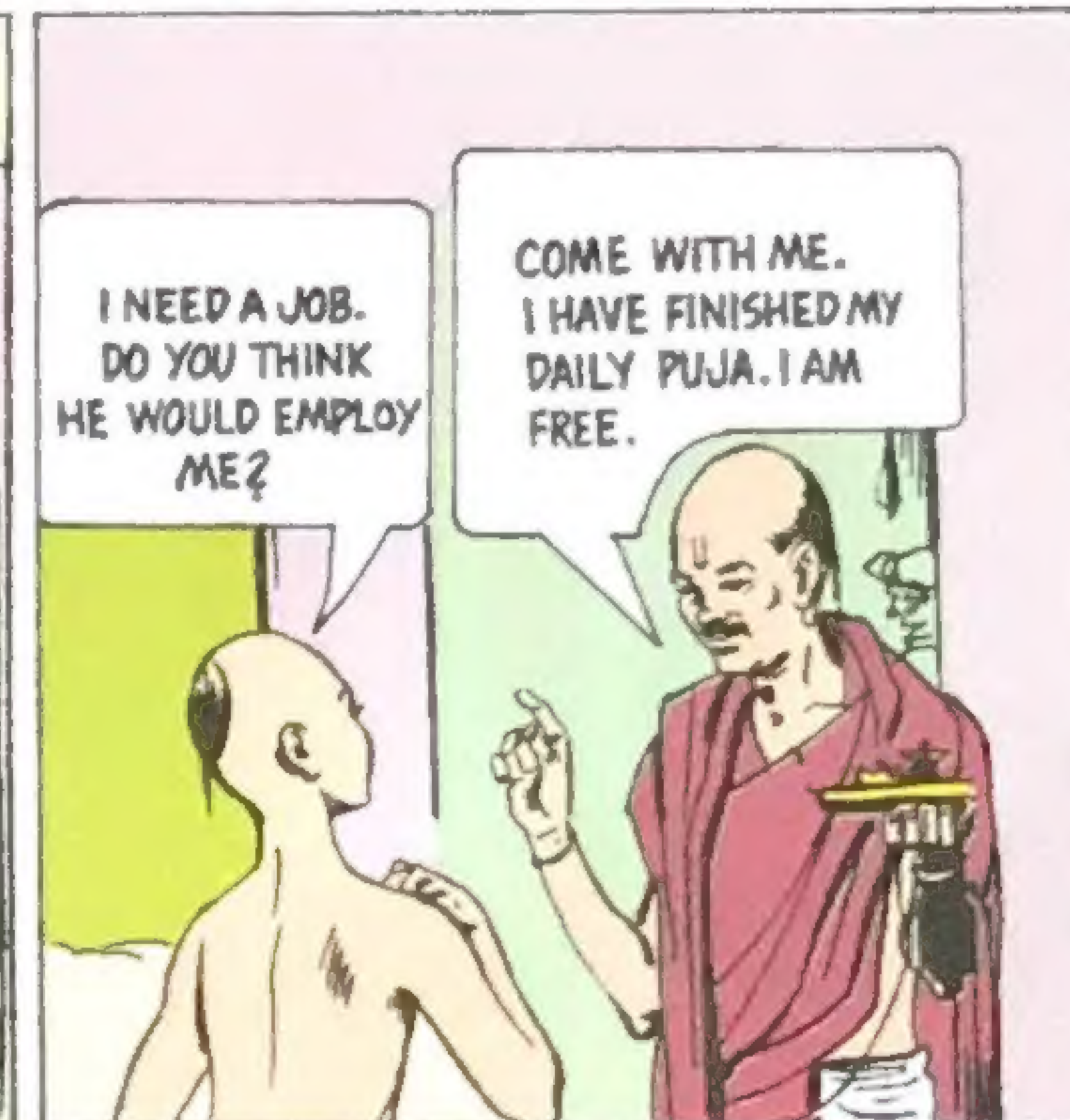
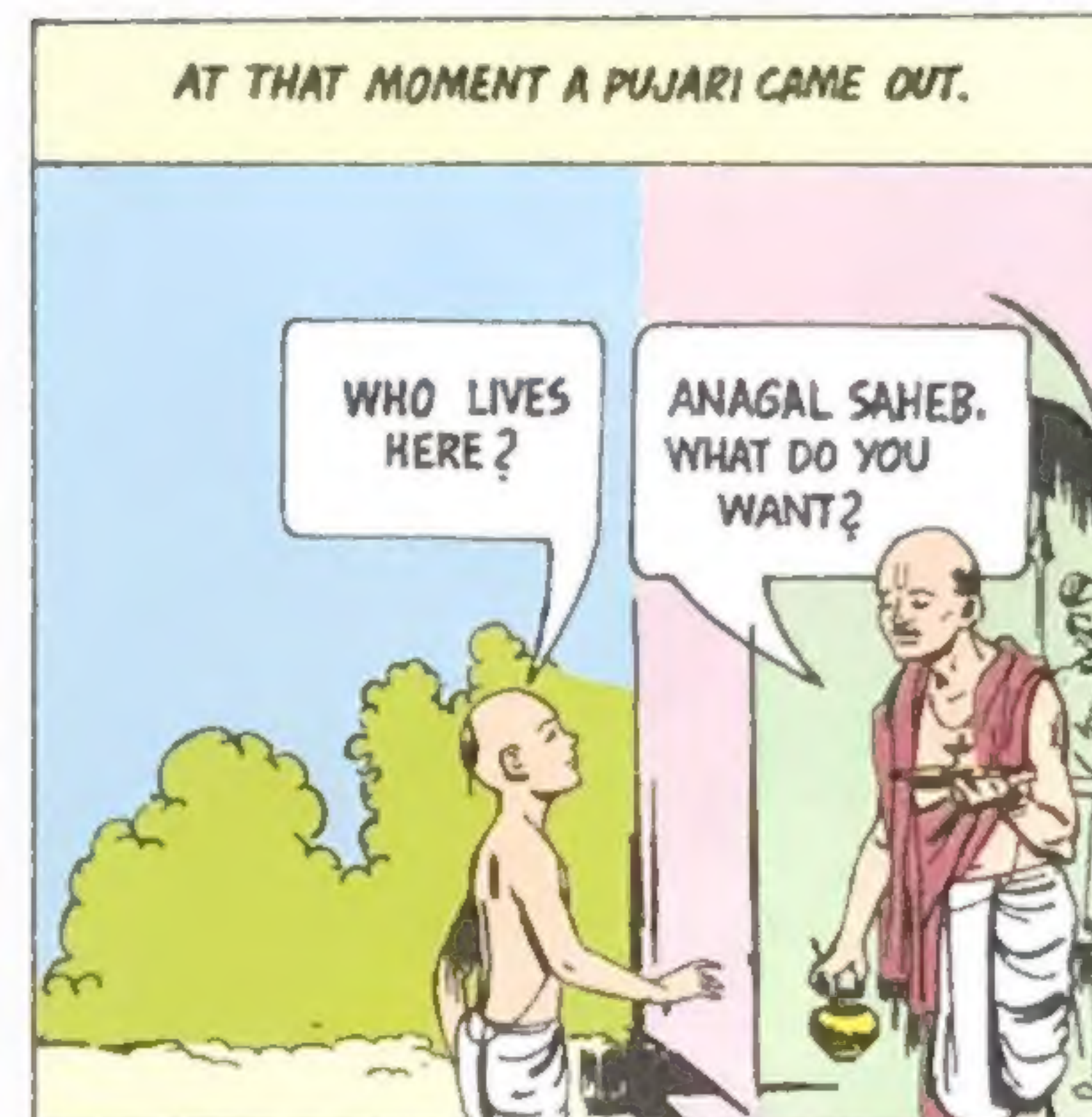
RAM WAS COMPLETELY AT PEACE WITH HIMSELF AND UTTERLY CONFIDENT.



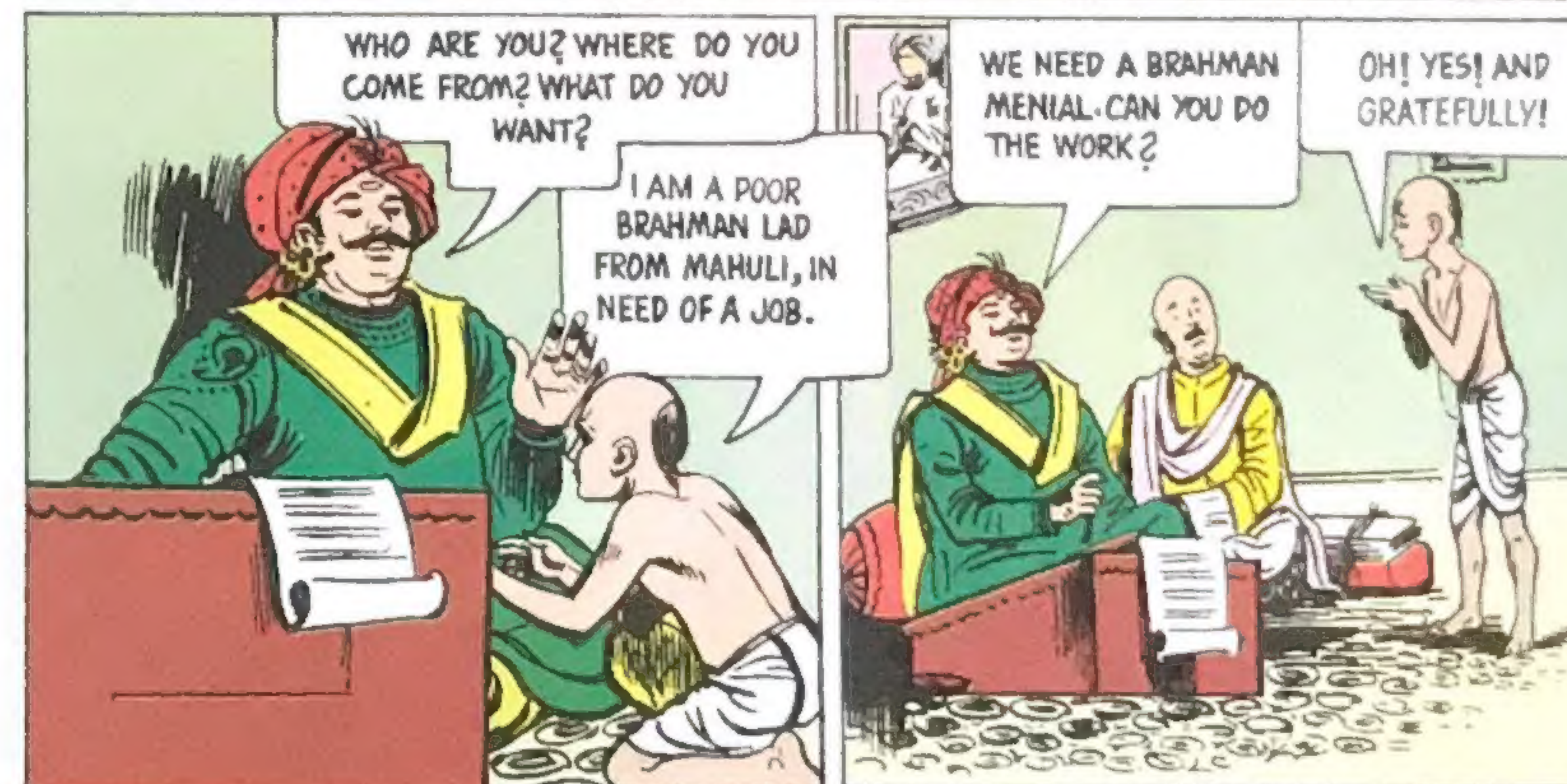
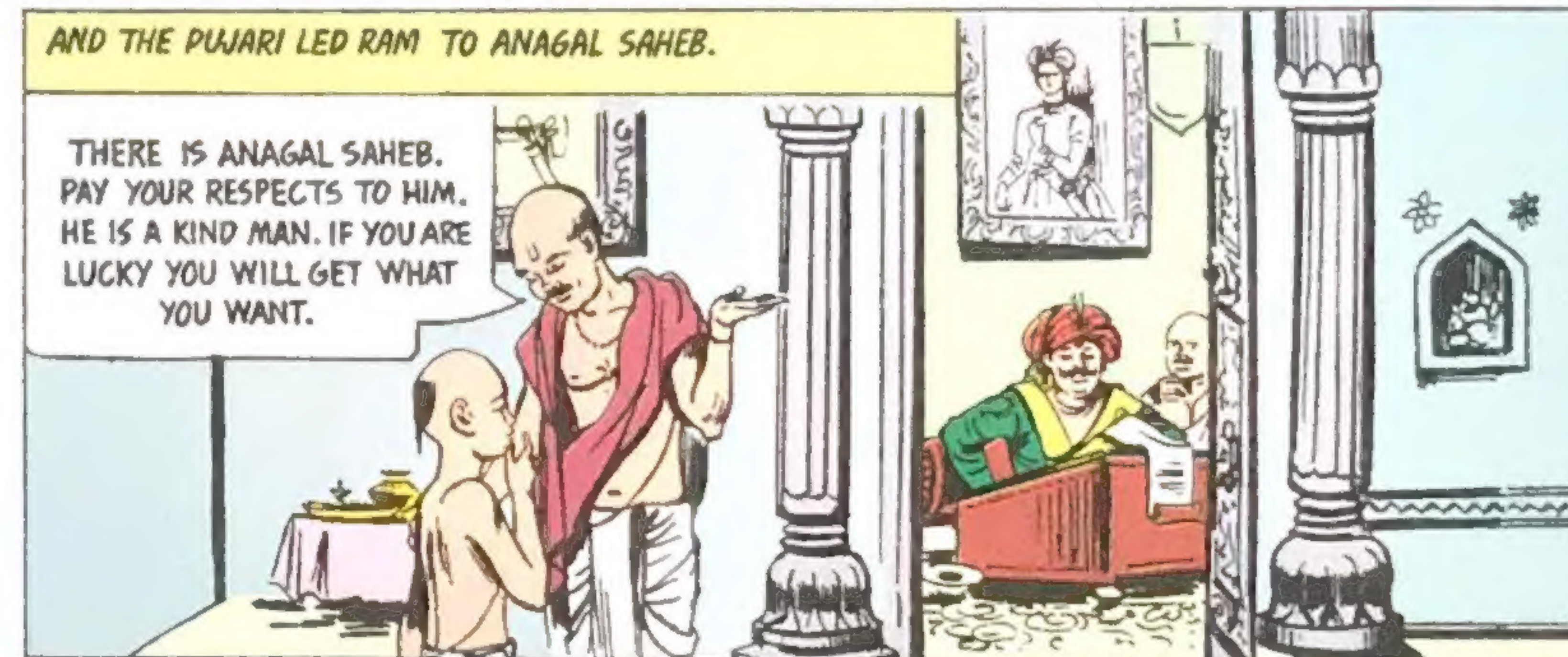
HE WALKED HAPPILY ON AND REACHED SATARA. THEN SUDDENLY ROUND A BEND IN THE ROAD—



AT THAT MOMENT A PUJARI CAME OUT.



AND THE PUJARI LED RAM TO ANAGAL SAHEB.



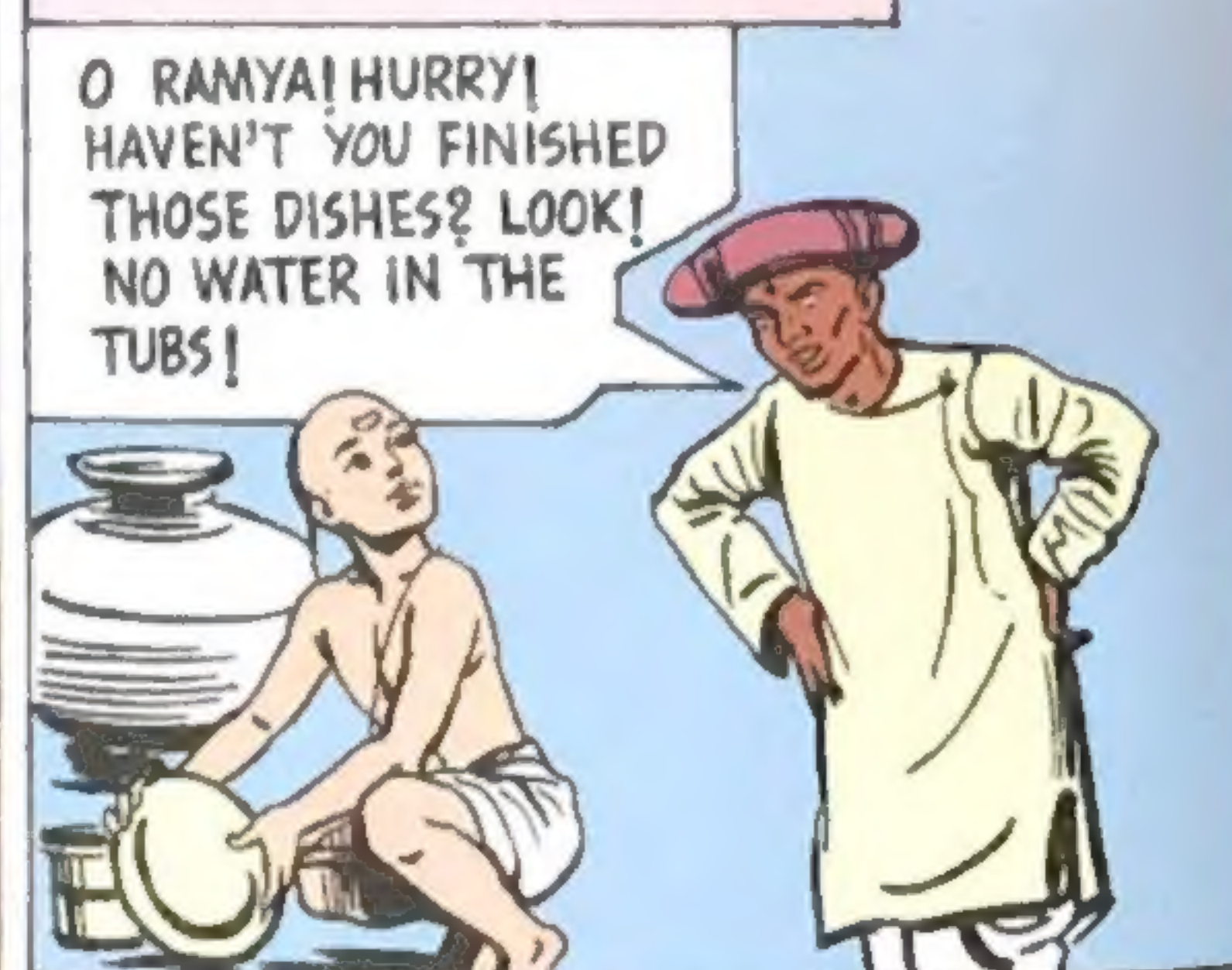




ANAGAL CALLED FOR THE CHIEF MENIAL.



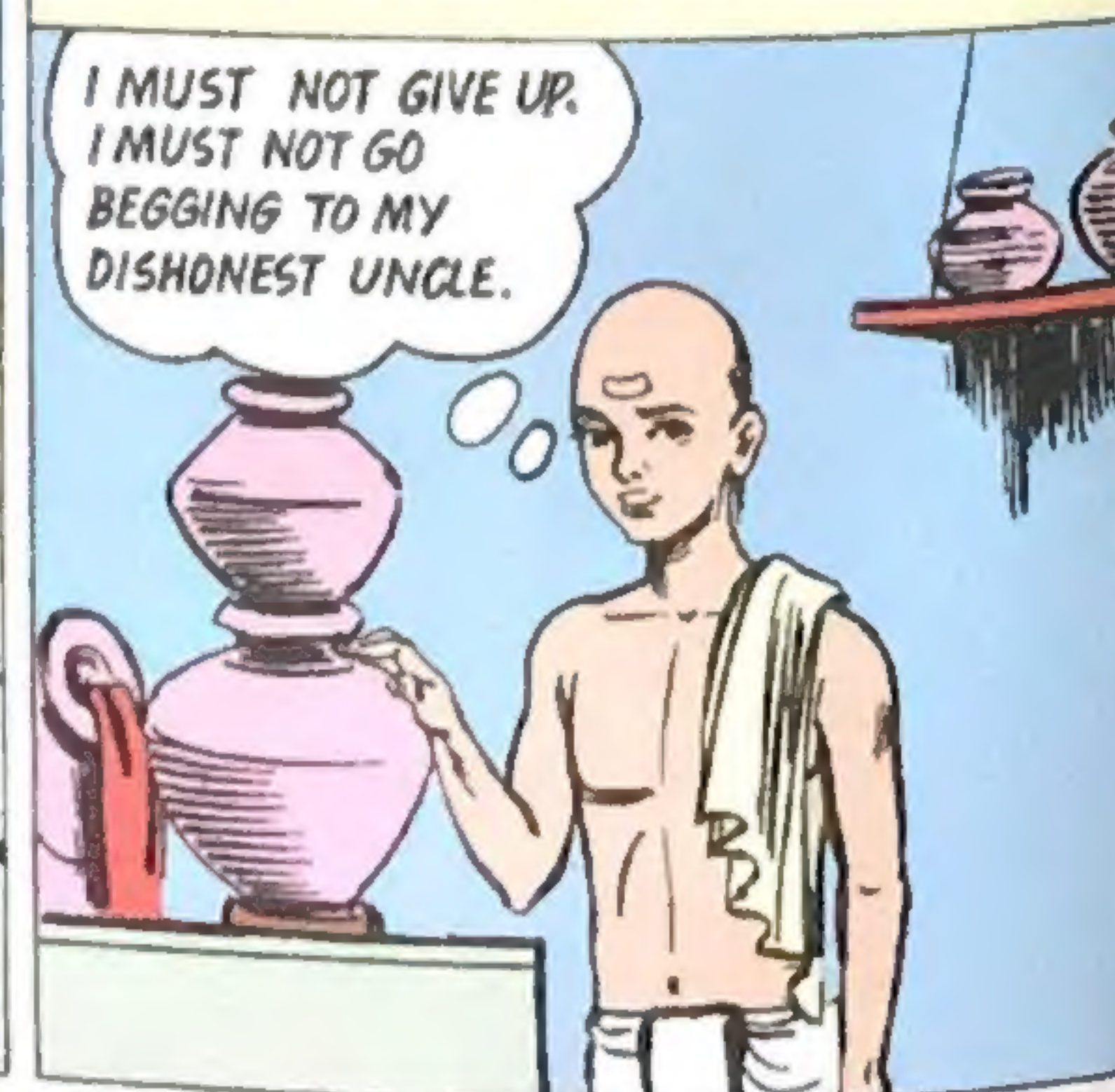
AND RAM'S ORDEALS BEGAN.



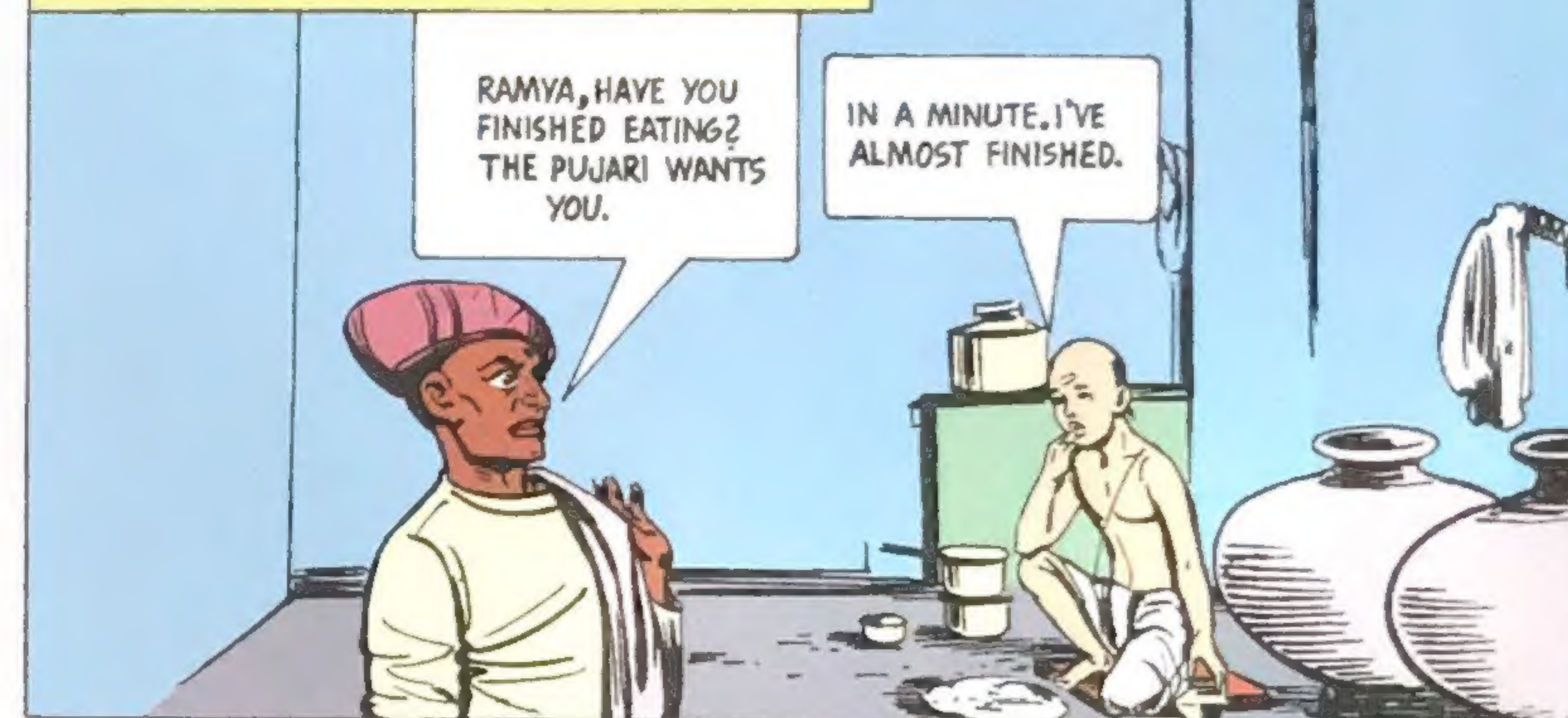
HE WAS OFTEN HUMILIATED.



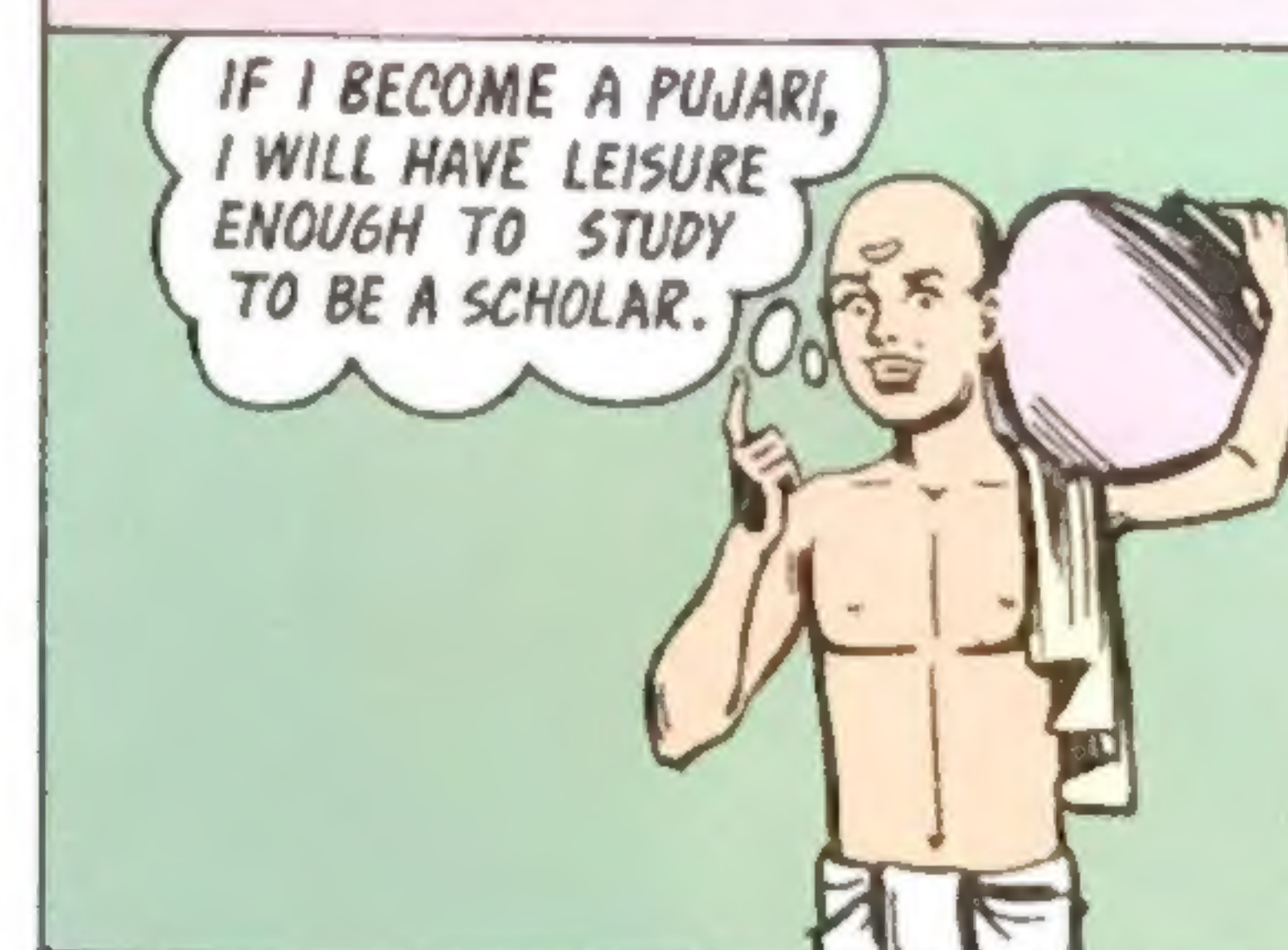
RAM OFTEN FELT LIKE GIVING UP HIS JOB. BUT—



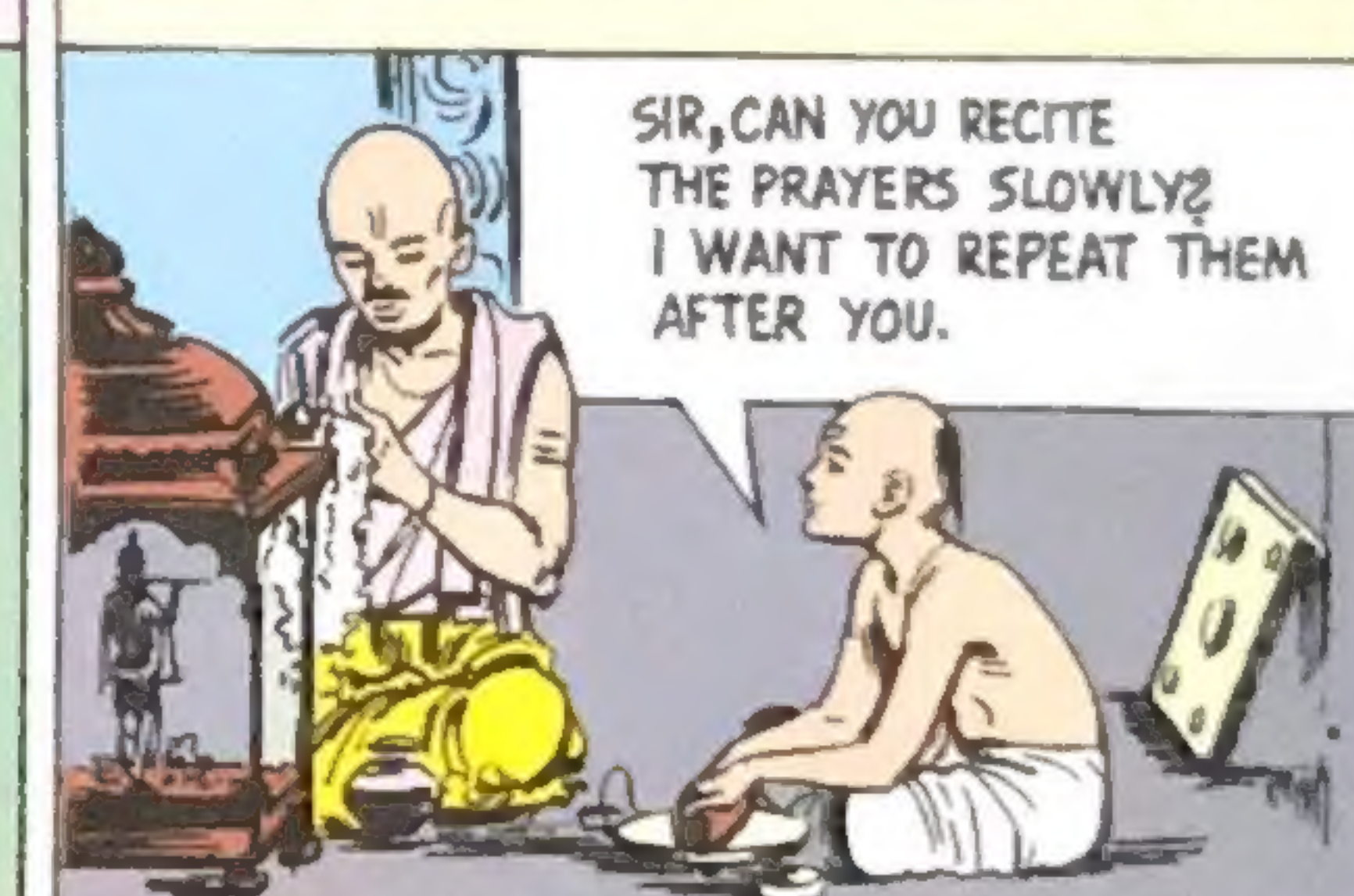
AS THE DAYS PASSED, RAM GOT USED TO HIS WORK.



ONE DAY A THOUGHT SUDDENLY STRUCK HIM—



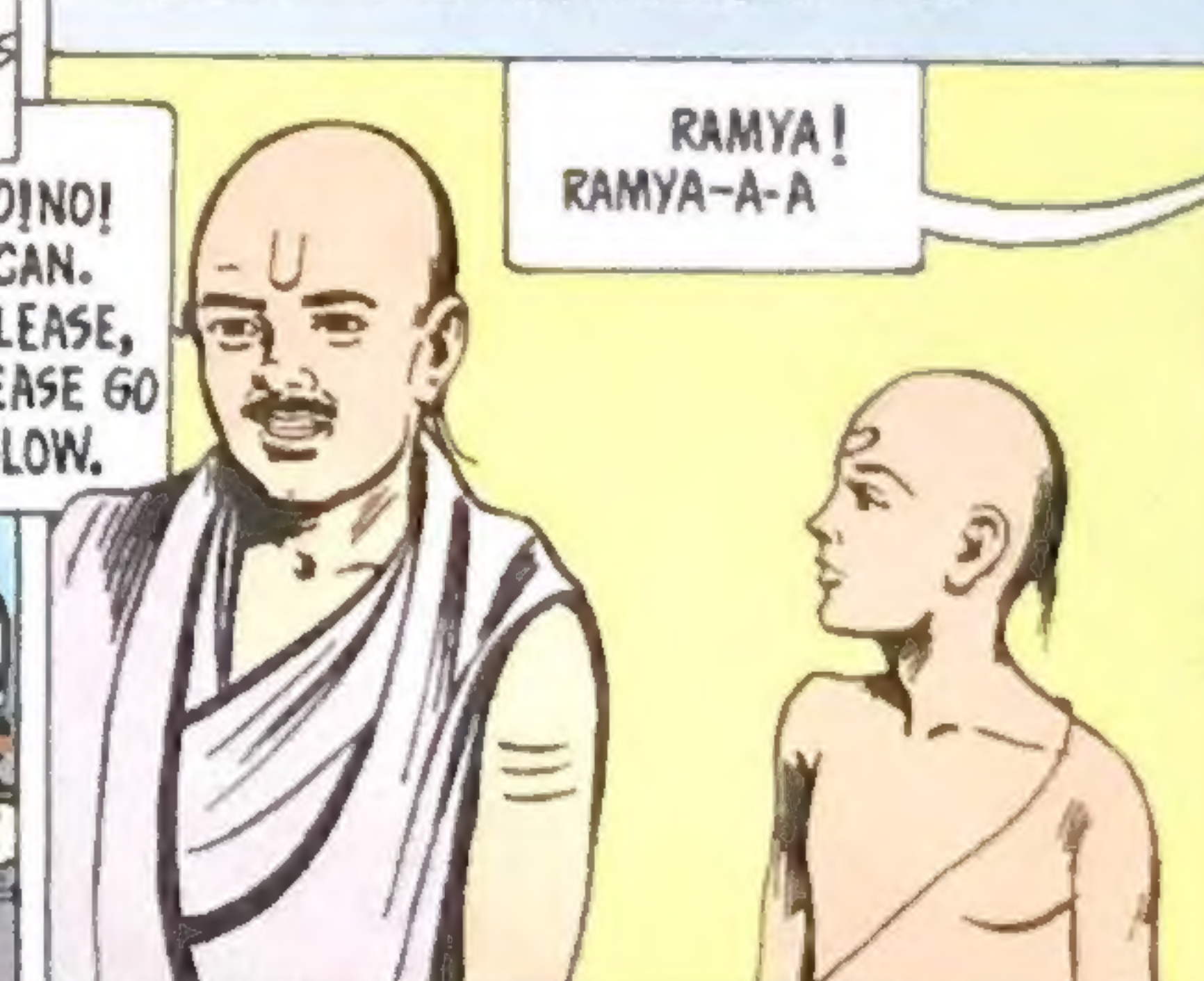
THAT DAY AS HE WAS ASSISTING THE PUJARI—



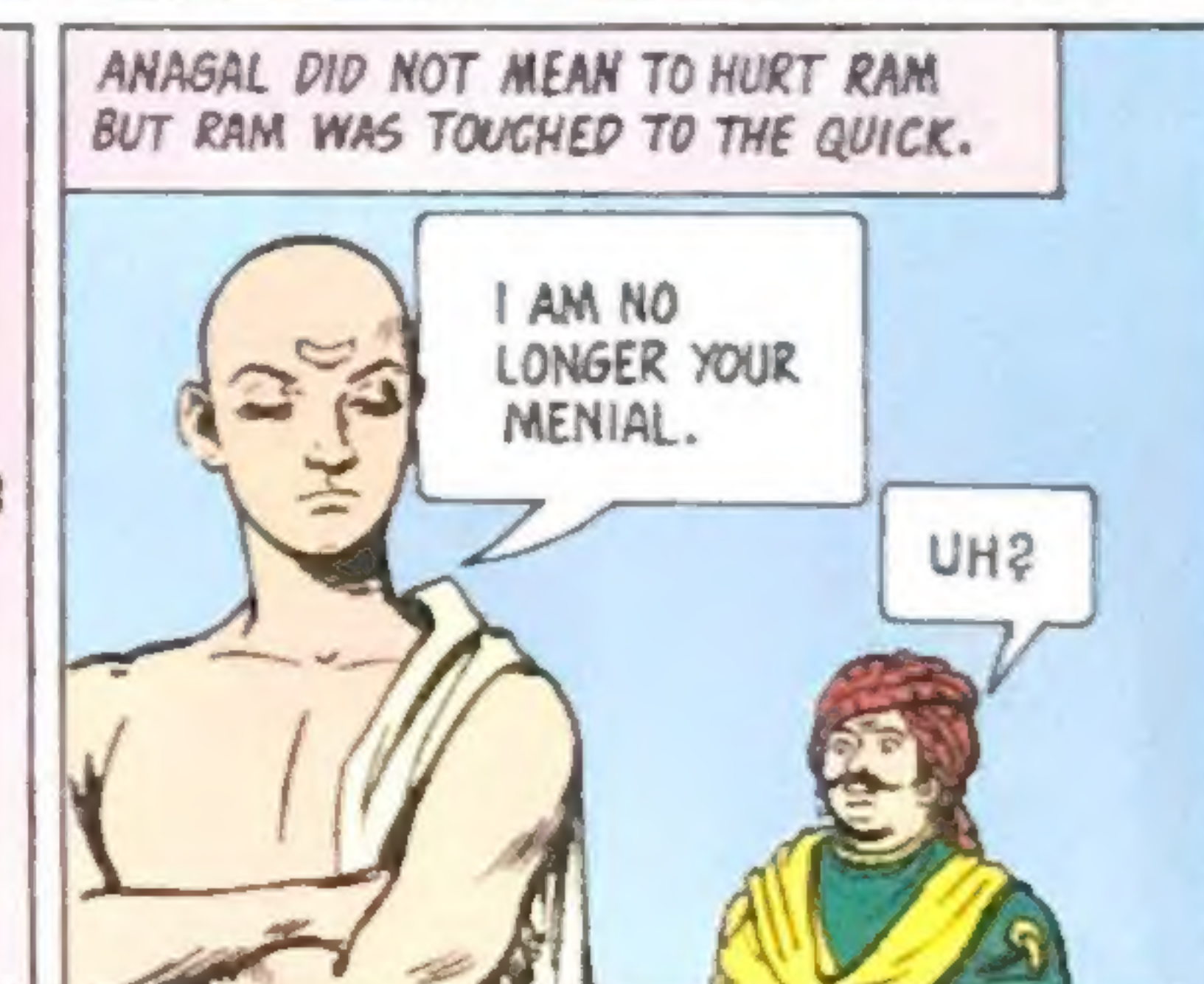
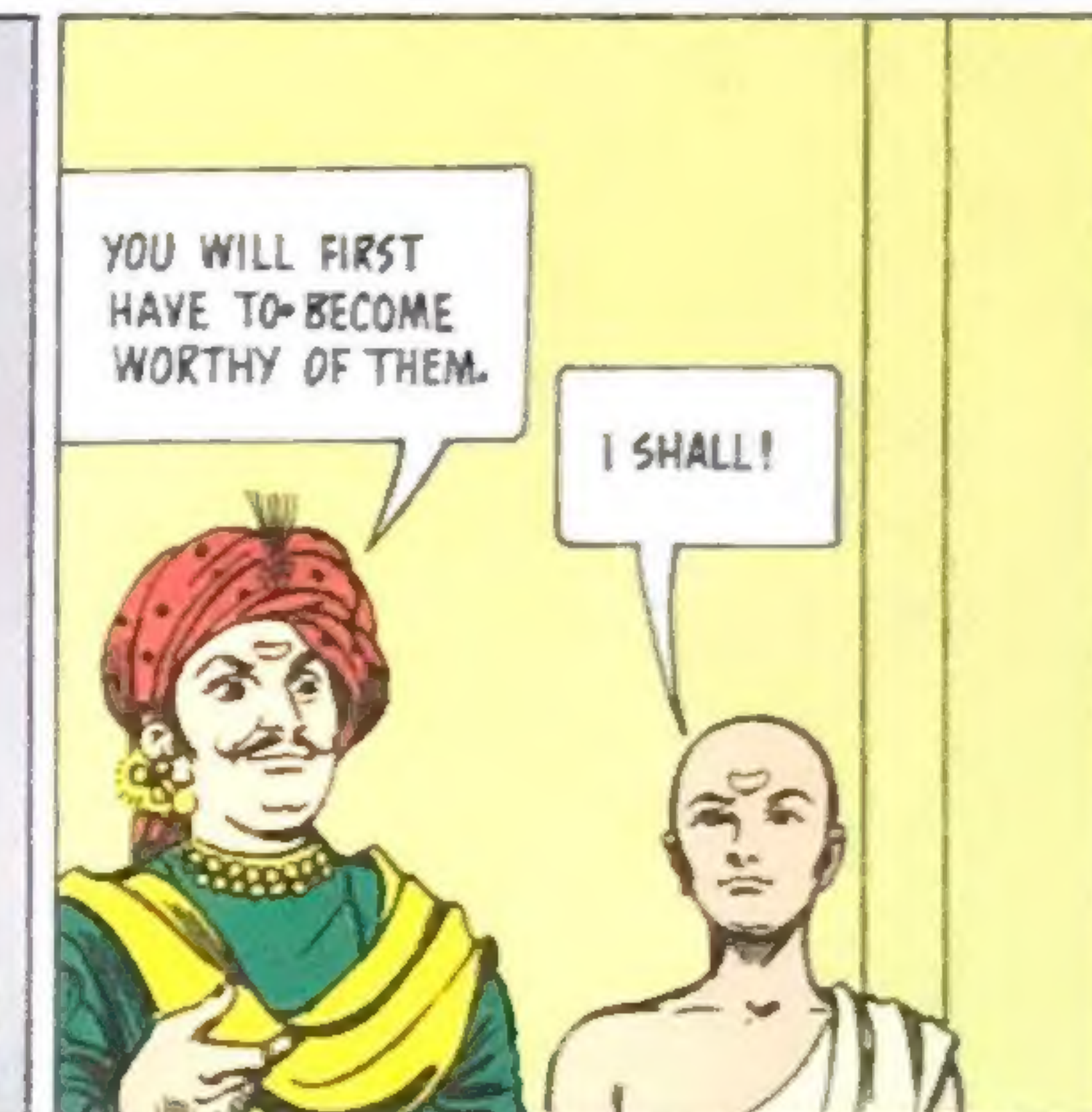
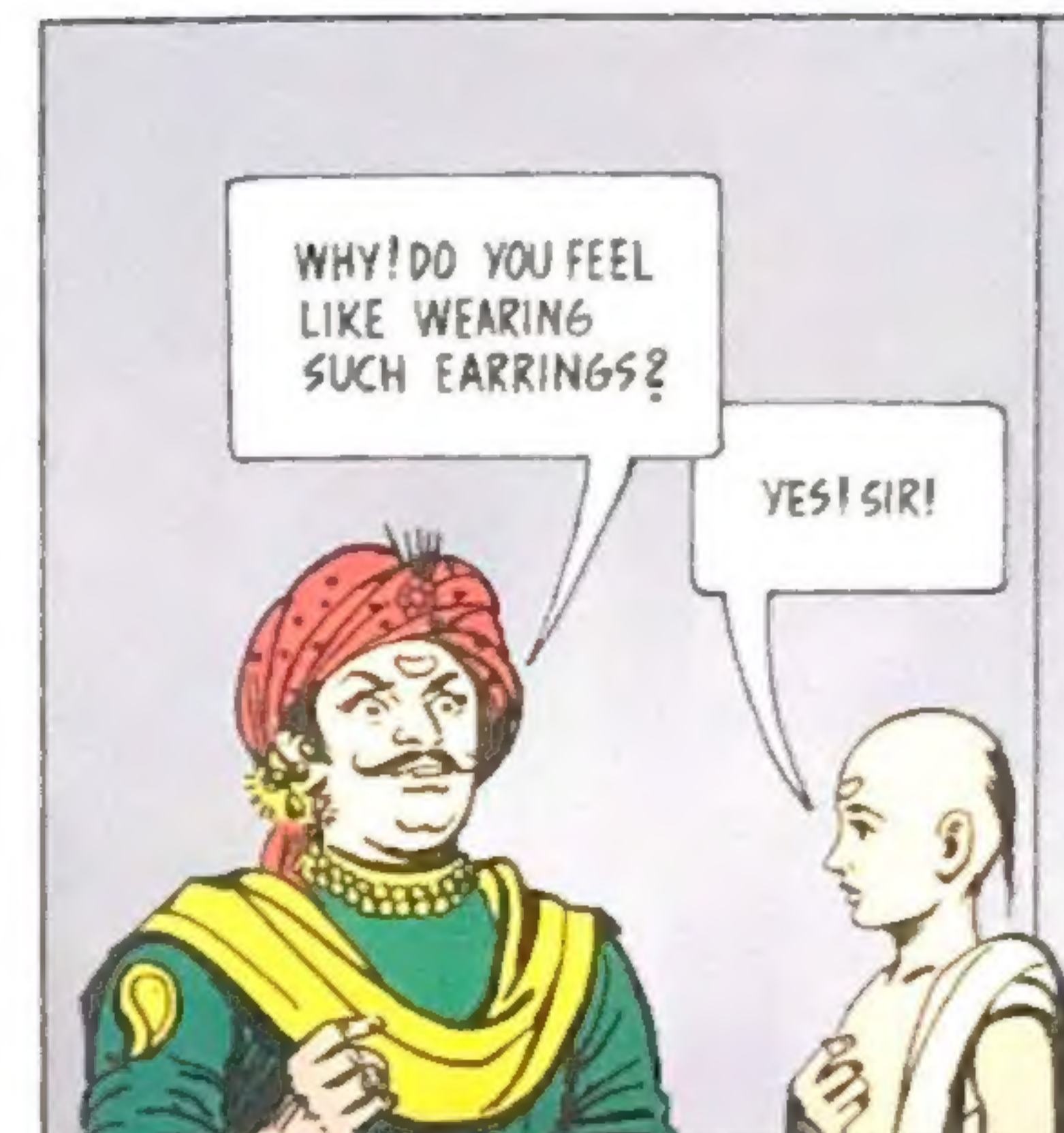
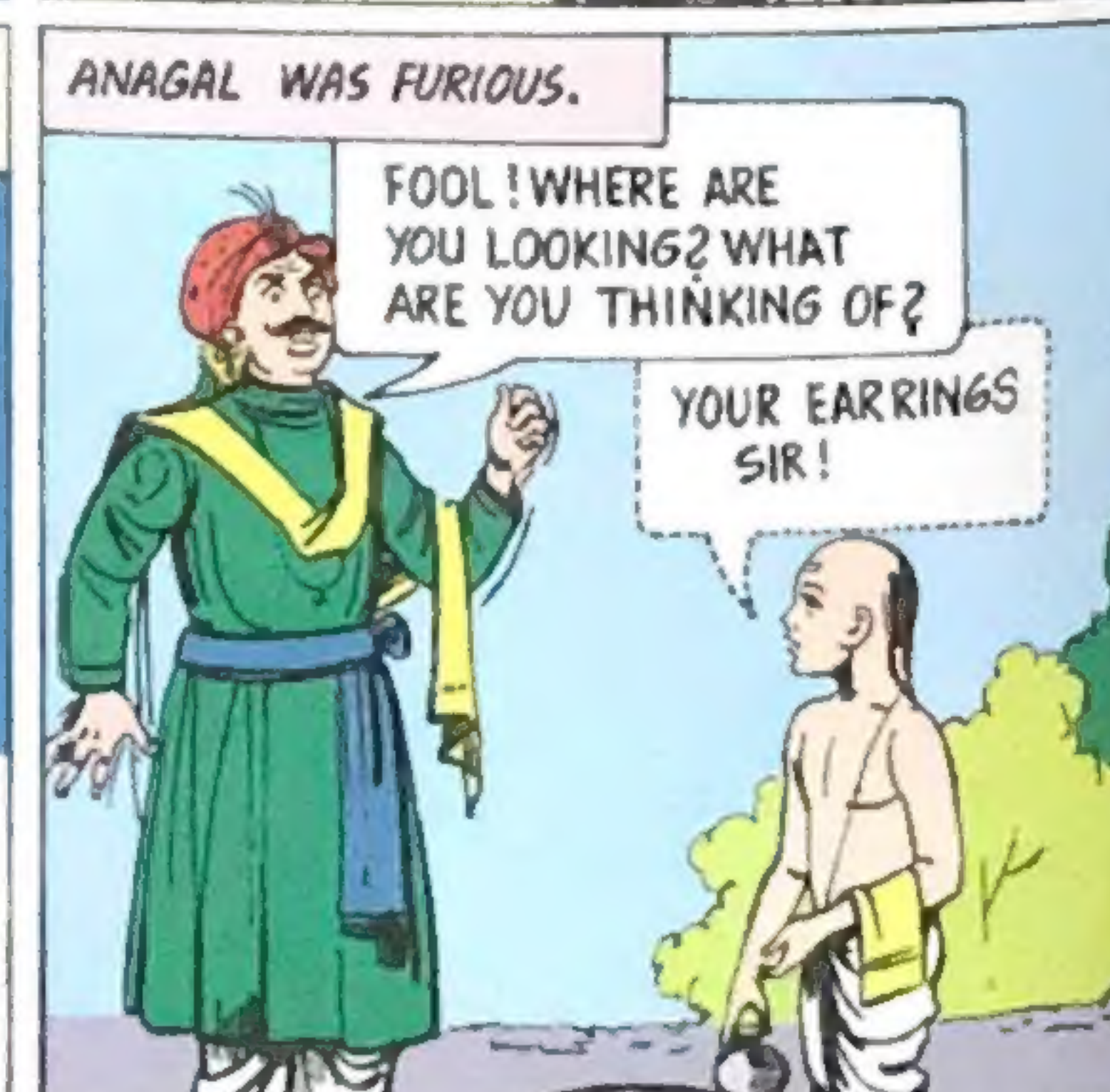
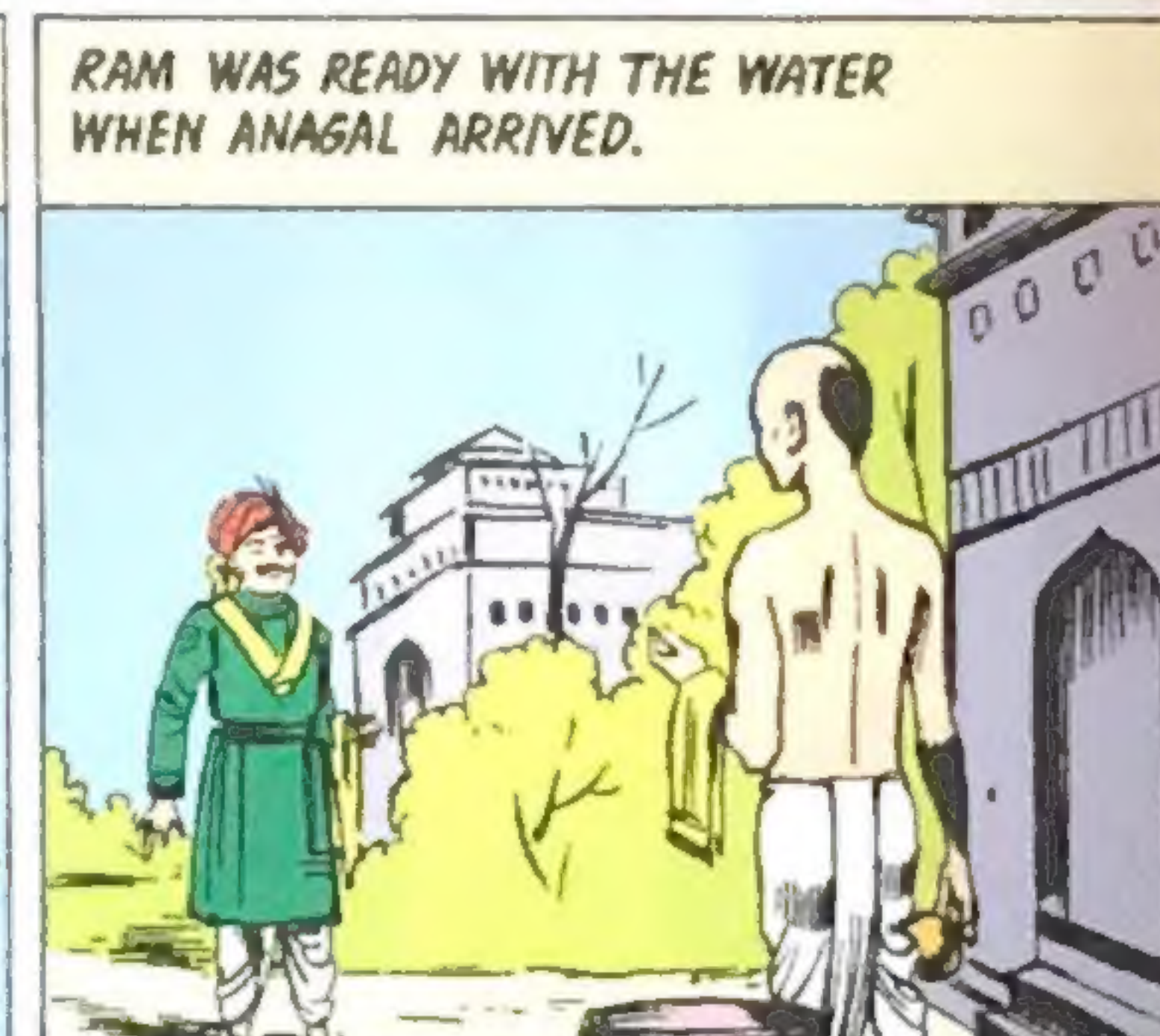
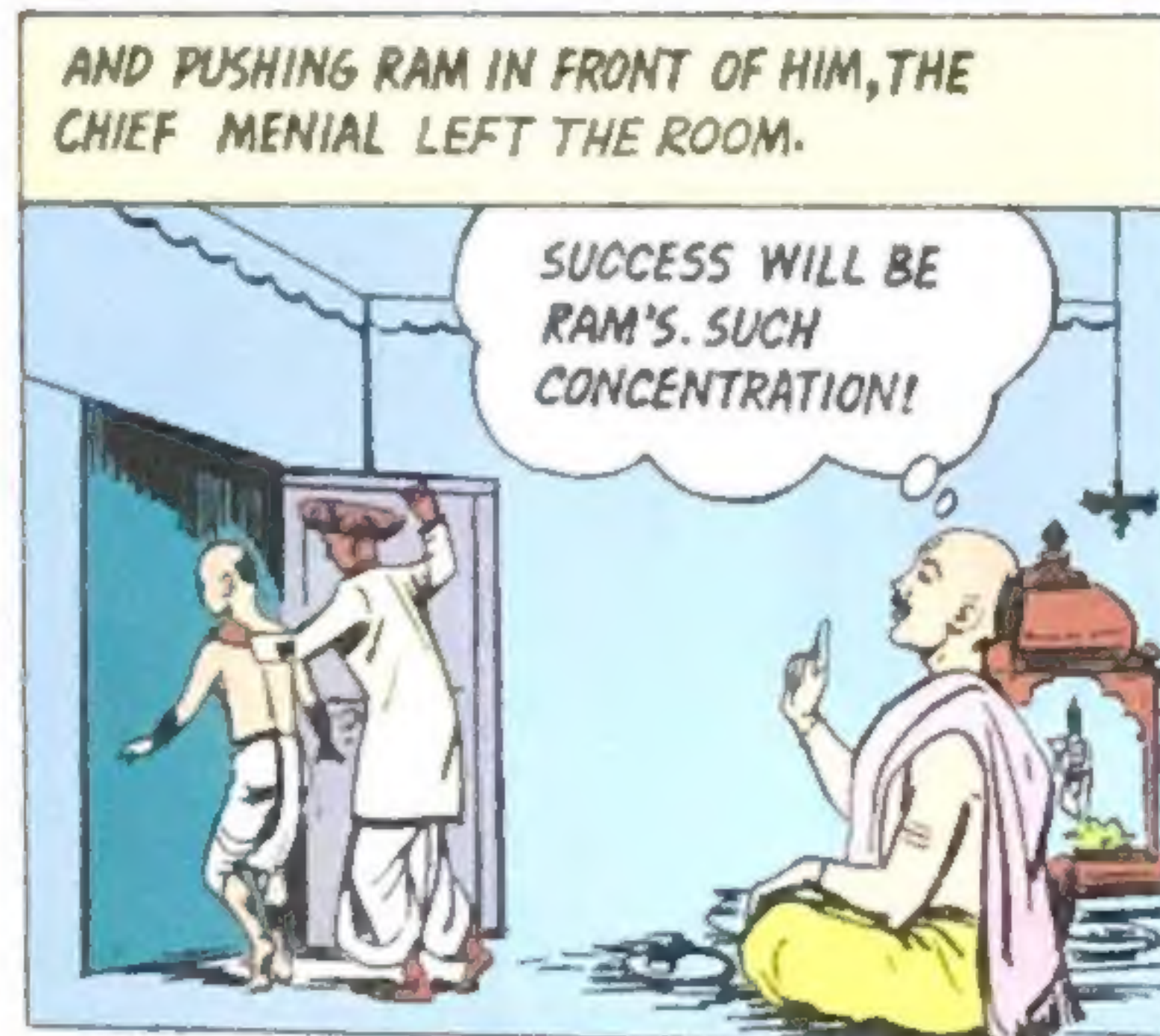
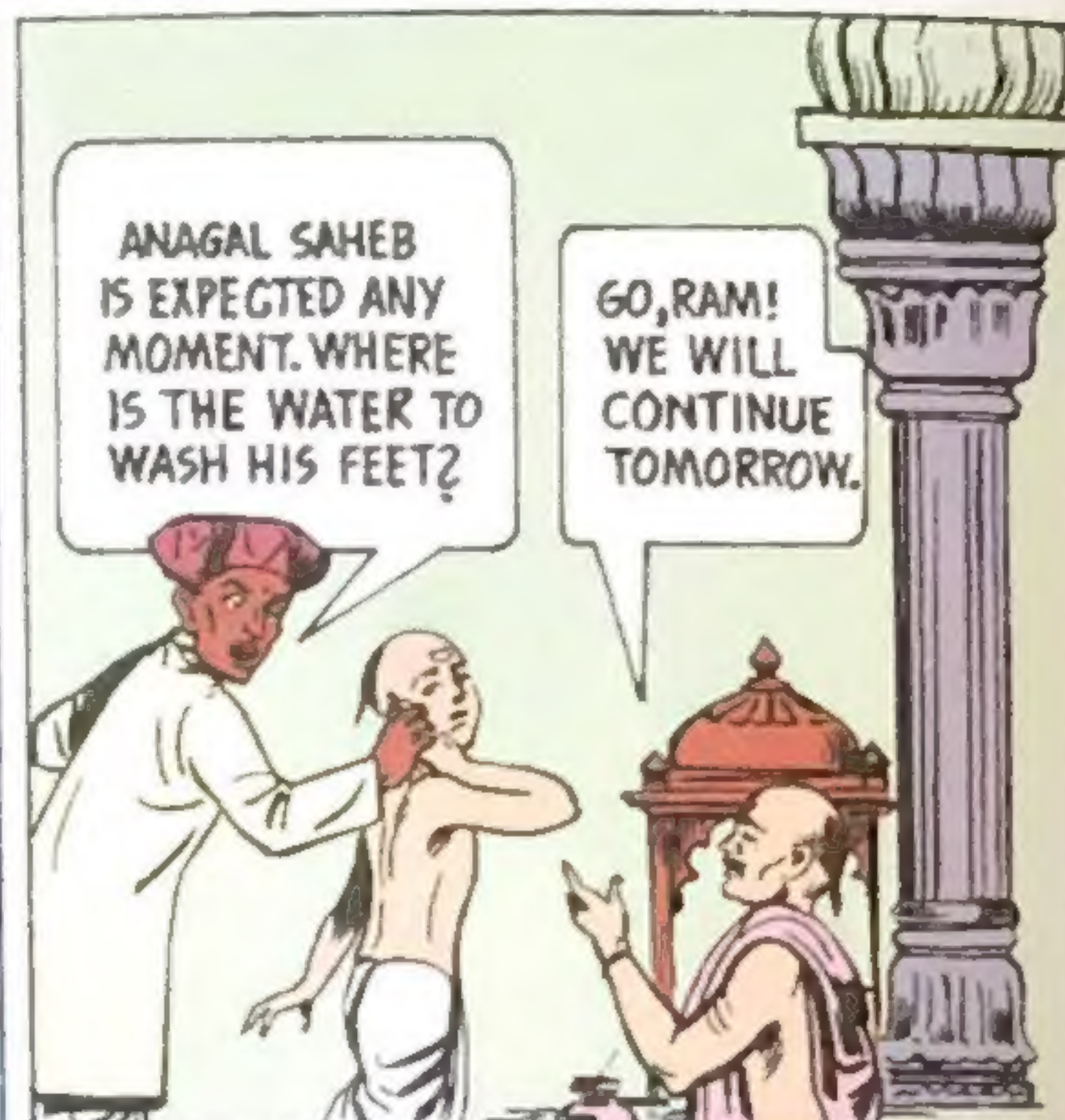
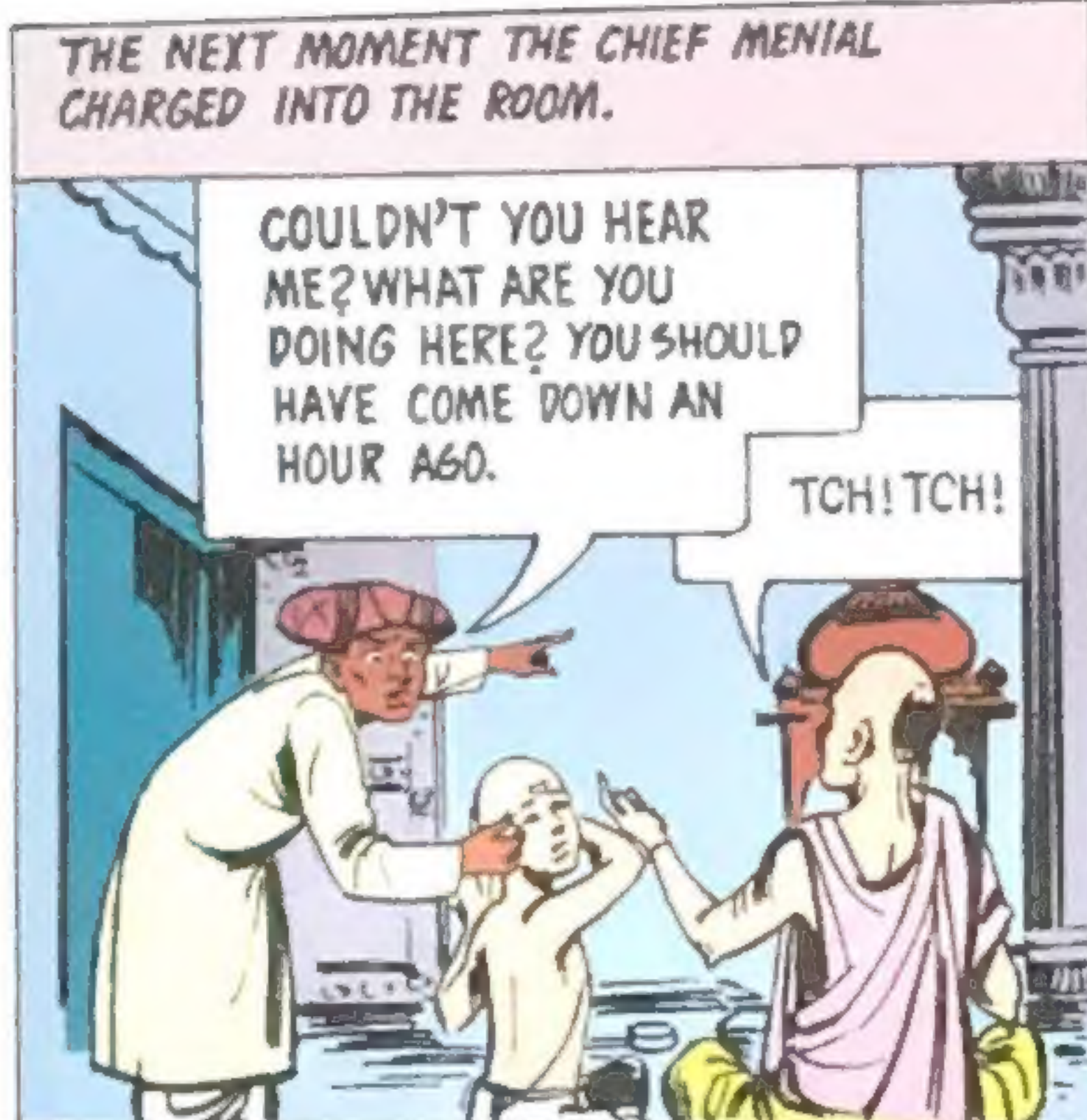
THE PUJARI WAS AMUSED.



THE PUJARI SMILED AND BEGAN RECITING THE PRAYERS AT A SLOWER PACE. JUST THEN—









BEFORE ANAGAL COULD REPLY THE PUJARI CAME ON THE SCENE.

I AM CONFIDENT HE WILL.

AND THE PUJARI TOLD ANAGAL ABOUT RAM'S ATTEMPTS TO LEARN SHLOKAS AND HIS ABILITY TO CONCENTRATE.

ANAGAL REACHED INTO HIS CUMMERBUND AND PULLED OUT A BAG OF COINS.

THIS BOY IS NO ORDINARY MENIAL!

HERE I TAKE THIS WITH MY BLESSINGS. MAY YOU SUCCEED IN YOUR AMBITION.

THE TREK TO VARANASI WAS A LONG AND ARDUOUS ONE FOR THE SIXTEEN-YEAR-OLD RAM BUT HE FINALLY REACHED.

YOU HAVE GIVEN LEARNING AND WISDOM TO MILLIONS WHO HAVE COME TO YOU. I TOO HAVE COME TO YOUR FEET WITH THE HOPE OF ACQUIRING BOTH. DO NOT SPURN ME BUT GIVE ME THE PROTECTION OF A MOTHER.



HE WENT AROUND MAKING ENQUIRIES ABOUT THE BEST SCHOOLS.

GURU PAIGUNDE'S SCHOOL IS EASILY THE BEST. BESIDES THE GURU IS A KIND PERSON.

RAM WENT TO THE GURU.

SIR, I HAVE COME ALL THE WAY FROM MAHULI IN THE SOUTH. I WANT TO LEARN. PLEASE ACCEPT ME AS YOUR PUPIL.

WHERE DID YOU STUDY EARLIER? HOW FAR HAVE YOU STUDIED?

RAM WAS ASHAMED.

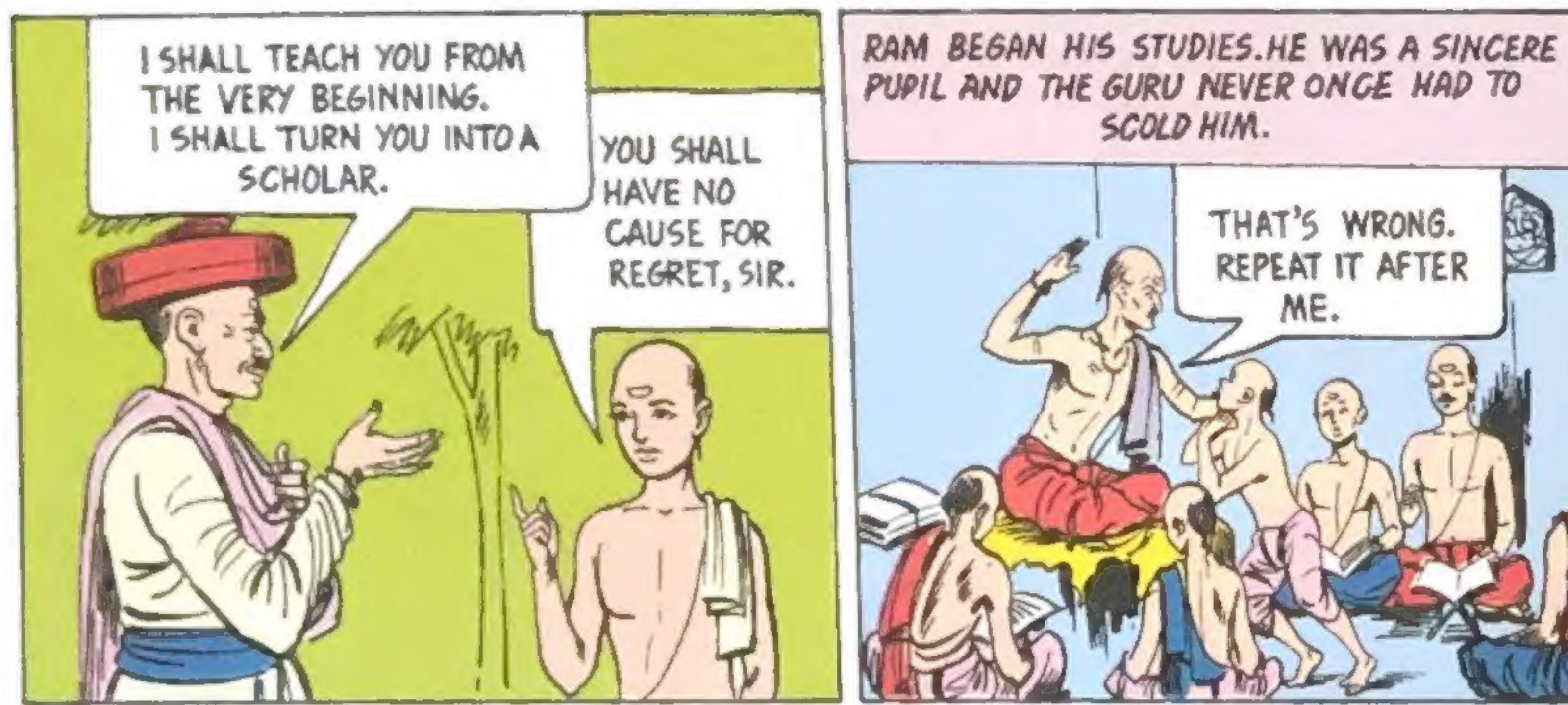
I HAVE NEVER BEEN TO SCHOOL BEFORE!

I SEE!

THE GURU UNDERSTOOD THE SITUATION IMMEDIATELY.

NEVER MIND. YOU HAVE THE WILL TO LEARN. THAT IS IMPORTANT. YOU SHALL BE MY PUPIL.





RAM BEGAN HIS STUDIES. HE WAS A SINCERE PUPIL AND THE GURU NEVER ONCE HAD TO SCOLD HIM.

THAT'S WRONG. REPEAT IT AFTER ME.

HIS FELLOW STUDENTS OFTEN TEASED HIM BECAUSE HE WAS MUCH OLDER THAN MOST OF THEM.



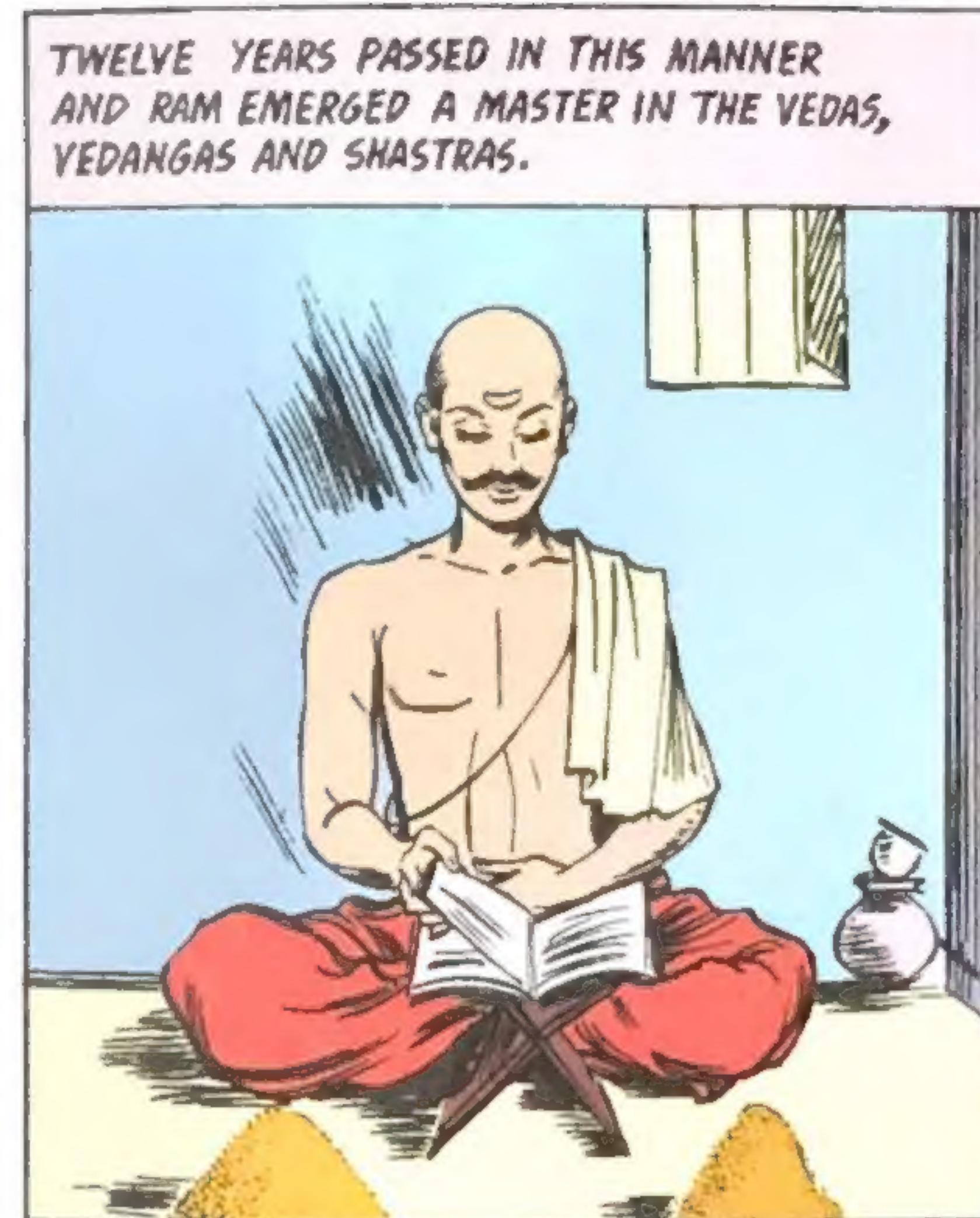
SEE RAM! WE TOO HAVE GROWN MOUSTACHES. HAI HAI

BUT RAM TOOK THE TEASING GOOD-HUMOUREDLY AND SOON BECAME A FAVOURITE. ONE DAY—



WHAT ARE YOU DOING, RAM?

REPEATING MY SHLOKAS, AS MANY TIMES AS THE GRAINS OF WHEAT HERE. THAT IS THE ONLY WAY TO MASTER SANSKRIT AT MY AGE.



TWELVE YEARS PASSED IN THIS MANNER AND RAM EMERGED A MASTER IN THE VEDAS, VEDANGAS AND SHASTRAS.

THEN ONE DAY—

RAM, TOMORROW YOU SHALL BE ORDAINED A SHASTRI, AND WILL BE FREE TO LEAVE THE SCHOOL.



THE NEXT DAY—

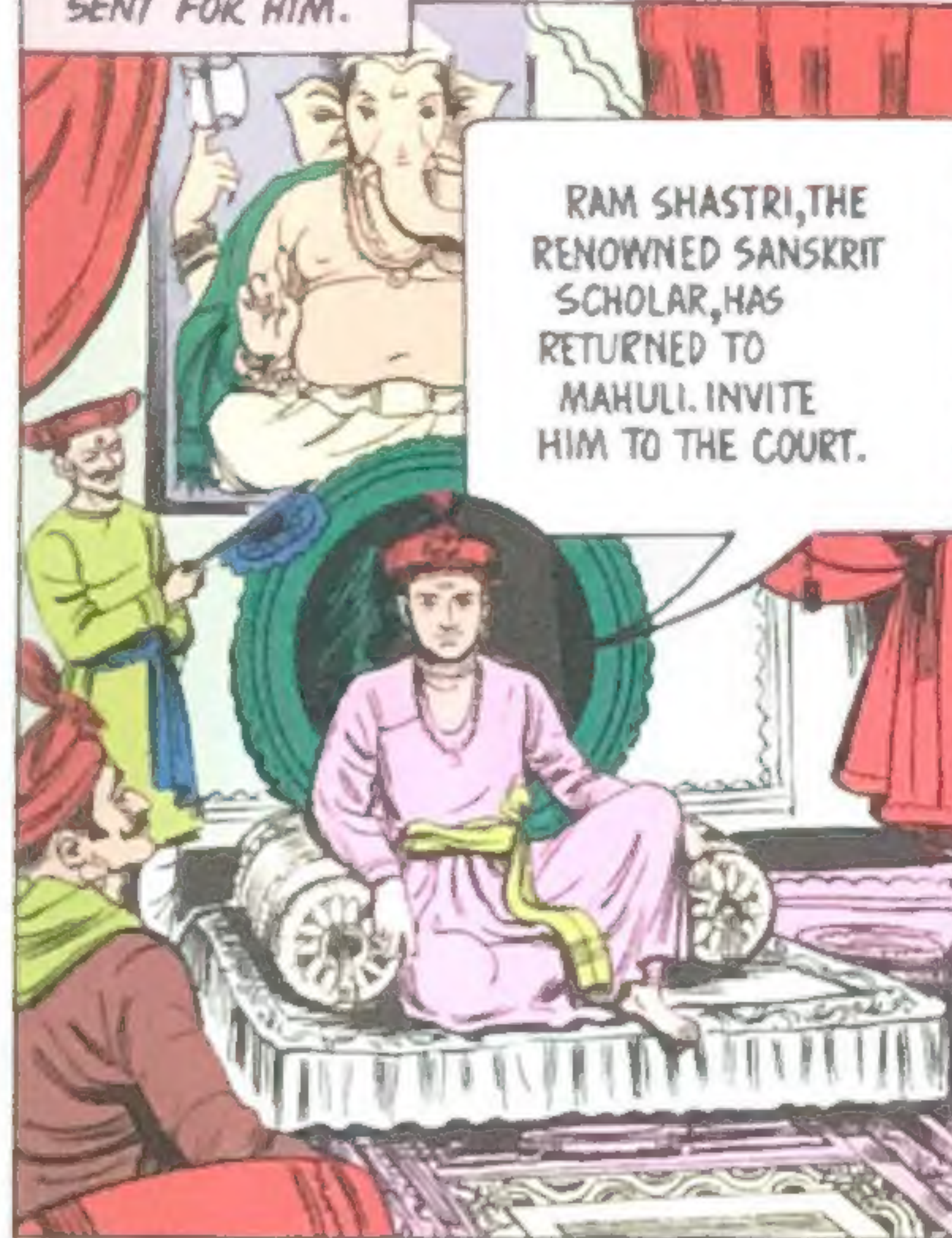
SIR, YOU MADE ME WHAT I AM TODAY. WHAT DAKSHINA CAN I OFFER YOU?

DON'T SELL YOUR KNOWLEDGE. THAT IS THE GREATEST DAKSHINA YOU COULD OFFER ME. LET JUSTICE, THE KING AND SOCIETY BENEFIT BY YOUR LEARNING.

AFTER THE CEREMONY WAS OVER RAM SHASTRI LEFT FOR MAHULI KSHETRA DETERMINED TO REPAY HIS GURU TO THE LAST.



AS SOON AS RAM SHASTRI ARRIVED AT MAHULI KSHETRA, PESHWA MADHAV RAO SENT FOR HIM.



RAM SHASTRI, THE RENOWNED SANSKRIT SCHOLAR, HAS RETURNED TO MAHULI. INVITE HIM TO THE COURT.

WHEN RAM SHASTRI CAME TO THE COURT AT POONA—



I WISH TO APPOINT YOU AS A JUDGE IN MY COURT.

MY LORD, I AM HONOURED!

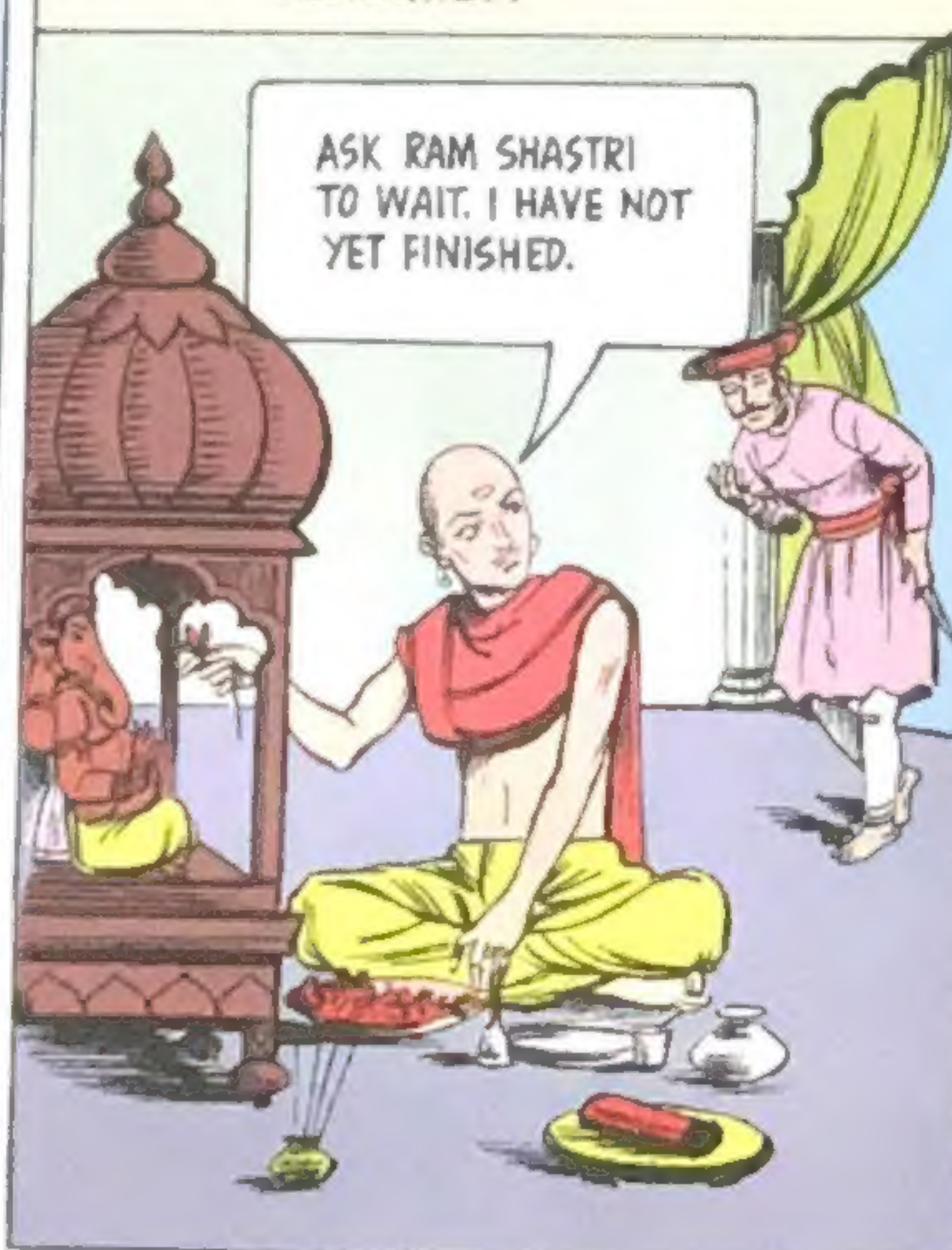
MADHAV RAO WAS A GOOD RULER. BUT A BRAHMAN BY BIRTH, HE SPENT FAR TOO MUCH TIME ON RELIGIOUS RITUALS, OFTEN IN PREFERENCE TO HIS STATE DUTIES.



IT IS AN HOUR SINCE THE DURBAR HAS ASSEMBLED BUT THE PESHWA IS STILL AT HIS PUJA.

I'LL SEE WHAT I CAN DO.

RAM SHASTRI SENT A MESSAGE TO THE PESHWA. BUT—



ASK RAM SHASTRI TO WAIT. I HAVE NOT YET FINISHED.

WHEN THE MESSENGER RETURNED UNSUCCESSFUL—



THE RULER NEGLECTS HIS DUTIES. BUT HOW CAN I LET HIM KNOW WITHOUT OFFENDING HIM?

THEN HE HAD AN IDEA. AS SOON AS THE PESHWA EMERGED FROM THE PUJA ROOM—



I AM RESIGNING, MY LORD. I AM LEAVING FOR KASHI.

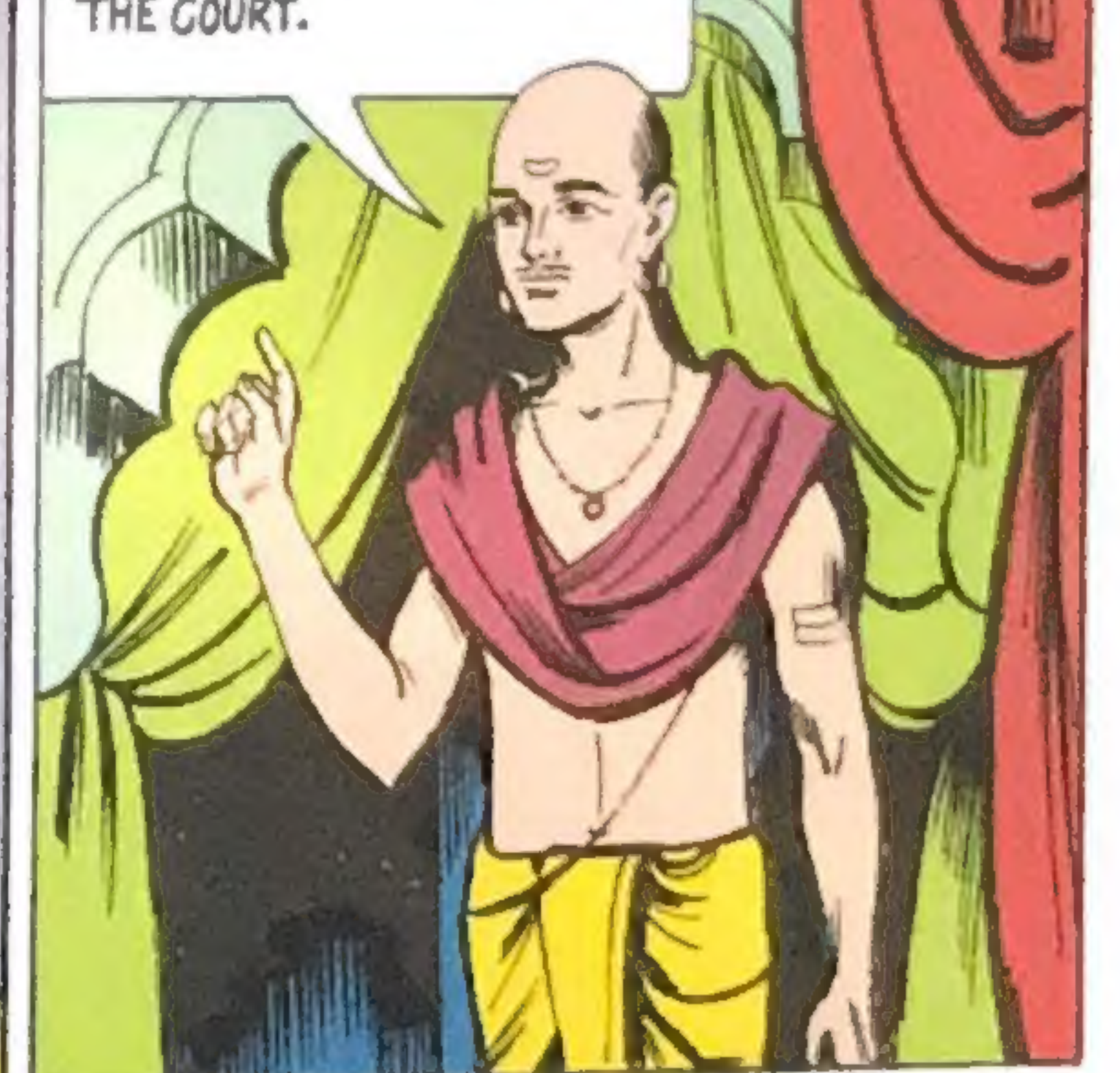
WHATEVER FOR?

MY DUTIES AS A BRAHMAN GO ILL WITH MY DUTIES AS A JUDGE. SO I HAVE DECIDED TO GIVE UP ONE OF THEM.



THE PESHWA IMMEDIATELY UNDERSTOOD.

YOU ARE A WISE MAN, INDEED. MATTERS OF STATE SHOULD COME FIRST. LET US GO AND MEET THE COURT.





MADHAV RAO'S CONFIDENCE IN RAM SHASTRI STEADILY GREW. WHEN THE CHIEF JUSTICE DIED, RAM SHASTRI WAS GIVEN THE APPOINTMENT.



A FEW MONTHS LATER—

IT IS THE HARVEST SEASON. I SHALL VISIT MAHULI FOR A FEW DAYS.



AS HIS PALANQUIN NEARED MAHULI KSHETRA—



MY PLOUGH!  
HELP! MY BULLOCKS!

O SPARE MY ONLY SON.  
I AM A WIDOW. WHO WILL  
LOOK AFTER THE FIELDS?

RAM SHASTRI STEPPED OUT OF HIS PALANQUIN.



WHAT IS THE  
MATTER? WHAT IS  
ALL THE COMMOTION  
ABOUT?

THE PESHWA'S SOLDIERS  
ARE LAYING WASTE OUR  
FIELDS—THEY ARE TAKING  
AWAY THE YOUNG MEN.

RAM SHASTRI GLANCED TOWARDS THE FIELDS.



COME ON!

I WON'T.

THEN I'LL HAVE  
TO TAKE YOU BY  
FORCE!

RAM SHASTRI WAS FURIOUS.



QUICK! FOLLOW ME!



STOP! WHAT  
ARE YOU UP TO?  
LEAVE HIM ALONE.

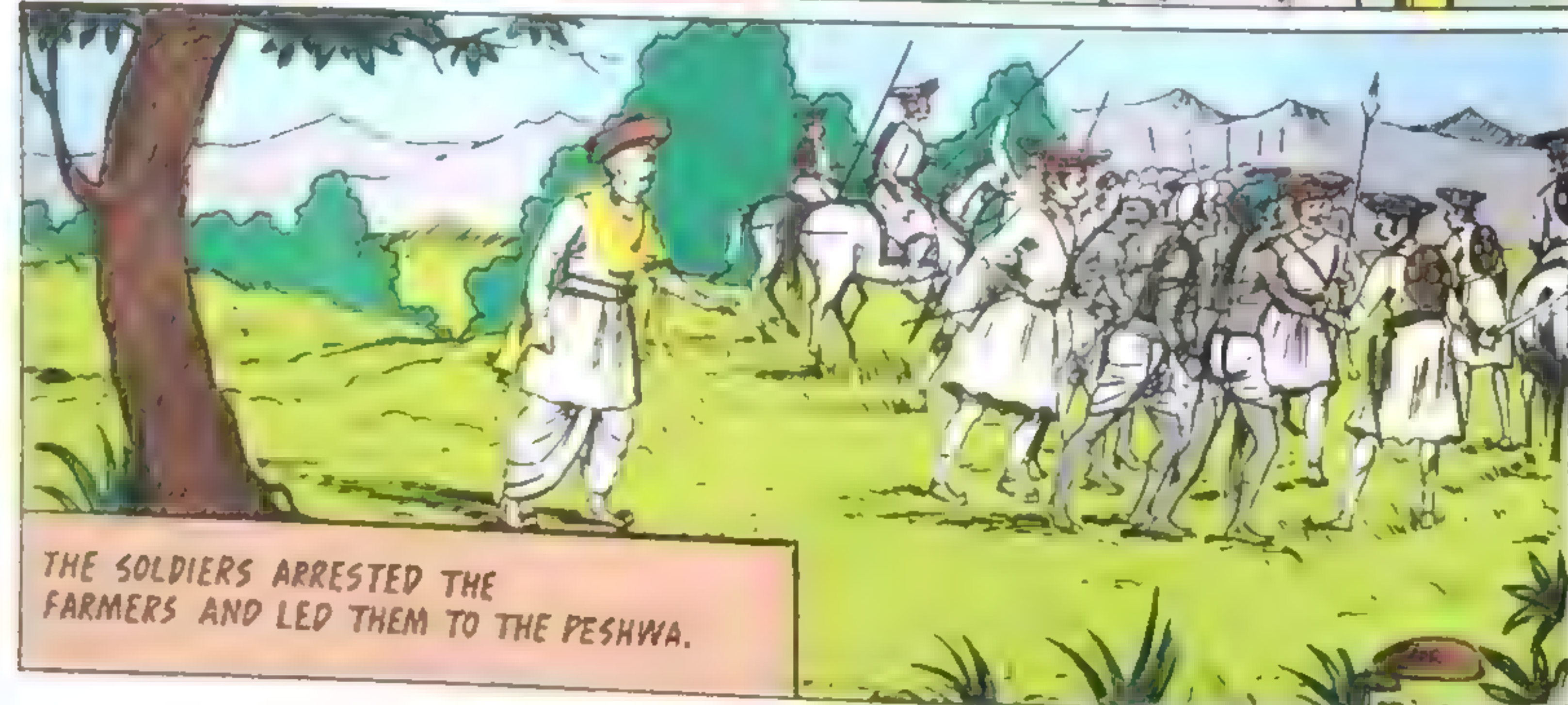
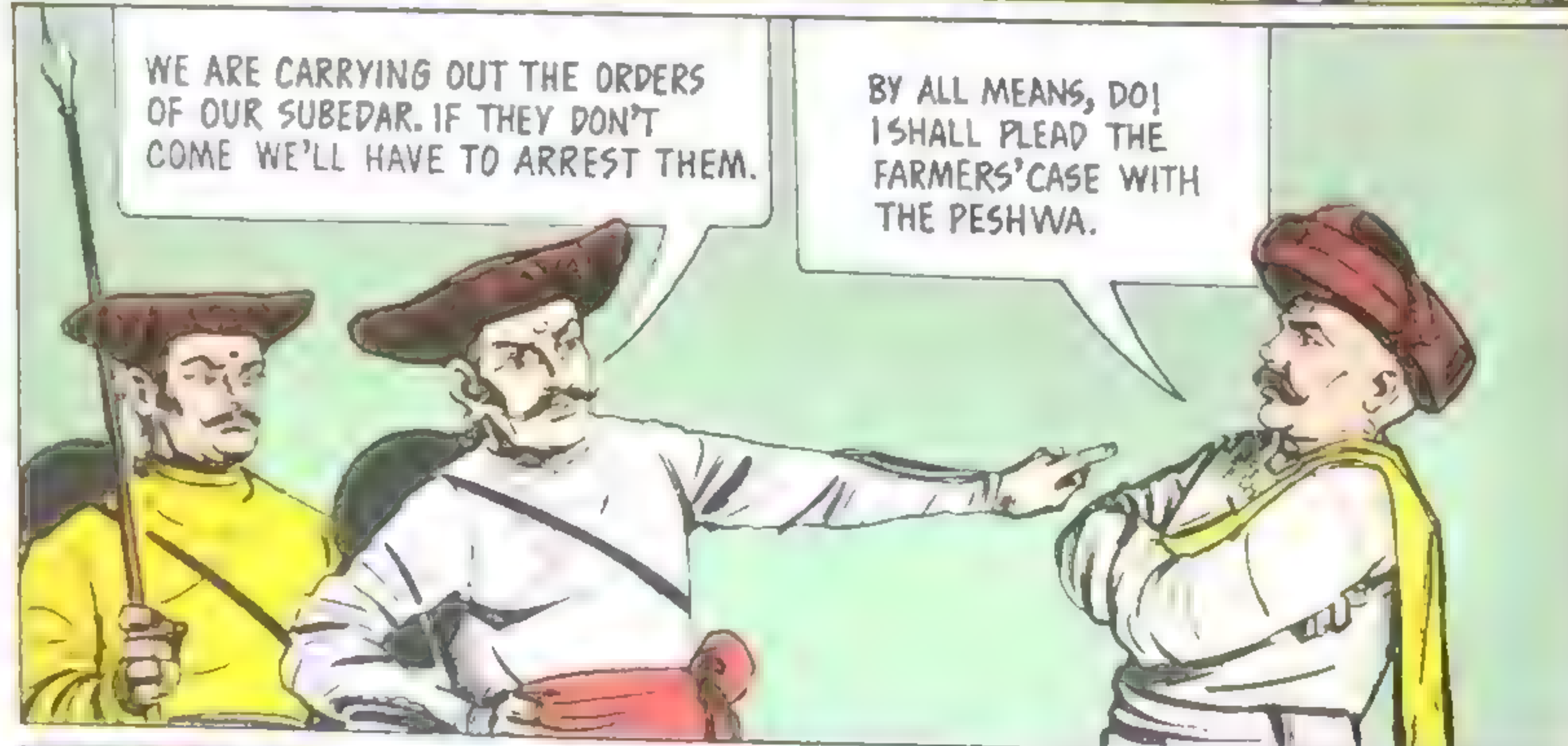


WE ARE UP TO NOTHING.  
THE PESHWA NEEDS FIFTY  
LABOURERS URGENTLY. WE  
ARE COLLECTING THEM.

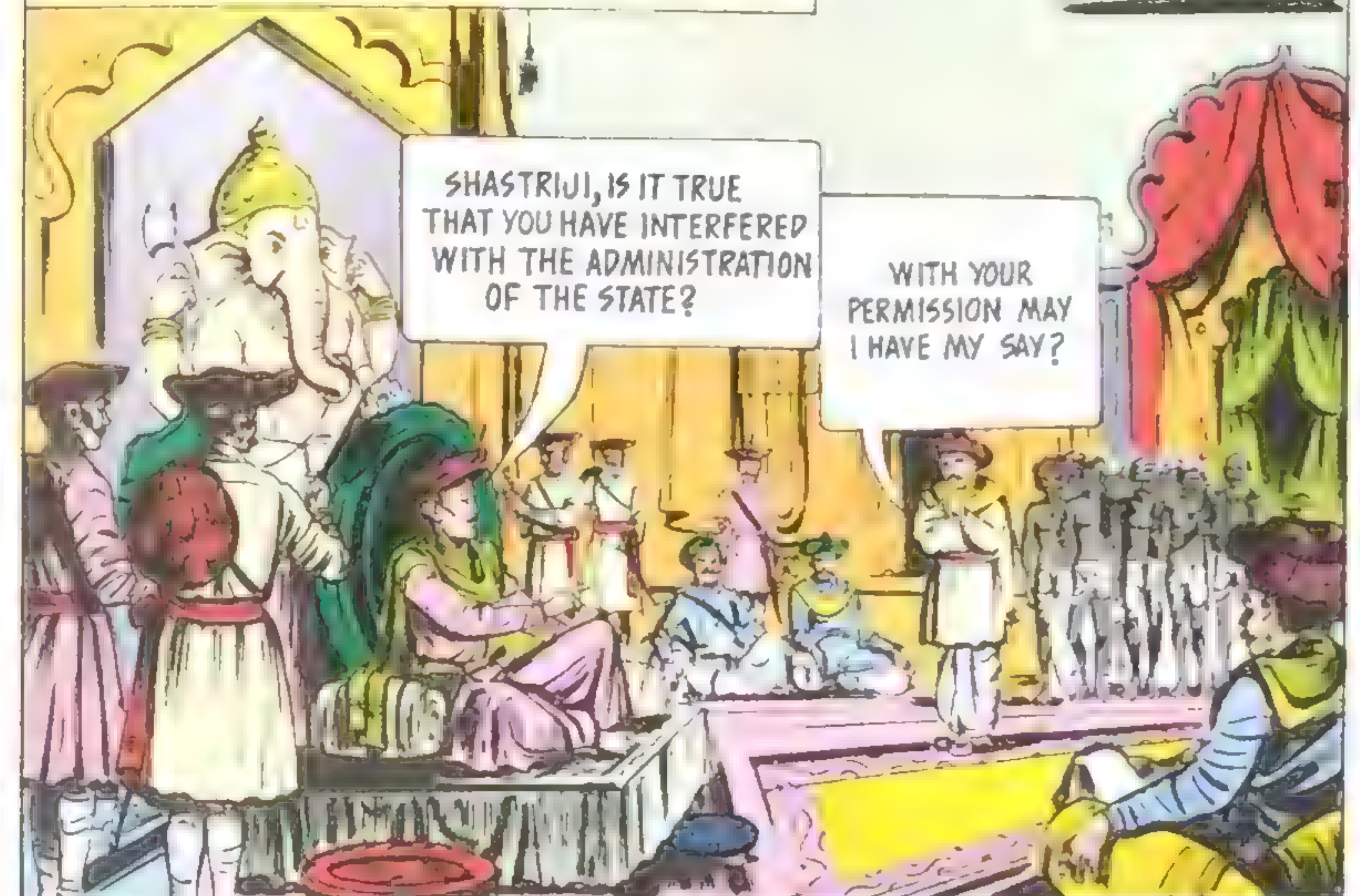
RELEASE THE FARMERS. I WILL  
TALK TO THE PESHWA.



THE FARMERS, CONFIDENT OF RAM SHASTRI'S PROTECTION, REFUSED TO MOVE.



THE PESHWA WAS SURPRISED WHEN HE HEARD THE CHARGES AGAINST RAM SHASTRI.







YOU HAVE A RIGHT OVER EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOUR SUBJECTS. BUT THERE ARE PRIORITIES.



IN TIMES OF NEED THESE VERY FARMERS WOULD RUSH TO YOUR AID.

WE WOULD!

WE WOULD!

AND OUR WIVES AND CHILDREN TOO.



I SEE YOUR POINT. FORCED LABOUR WILL BE BANNED HENCEFORTH IN OUR STATE.

THE PESHWA PARDONED THE FARMERS AND SENT THEM BACK TO THEIR FIELDS. RAM SHASTRI'S NAME BECAME A BYWORD FOR JUSTICE AND HIS FAME SPREAD OVER THE ENTIRE MARATHA KINGDOM.

ONE DAY MADHAV RAO'S DECLINING HEALTH TOOK A TURN FOR THE WORSE. HIS BROTHER NARAYAN RAO AND RAM SHASTRI WERE AT HIS BEDSIDE.



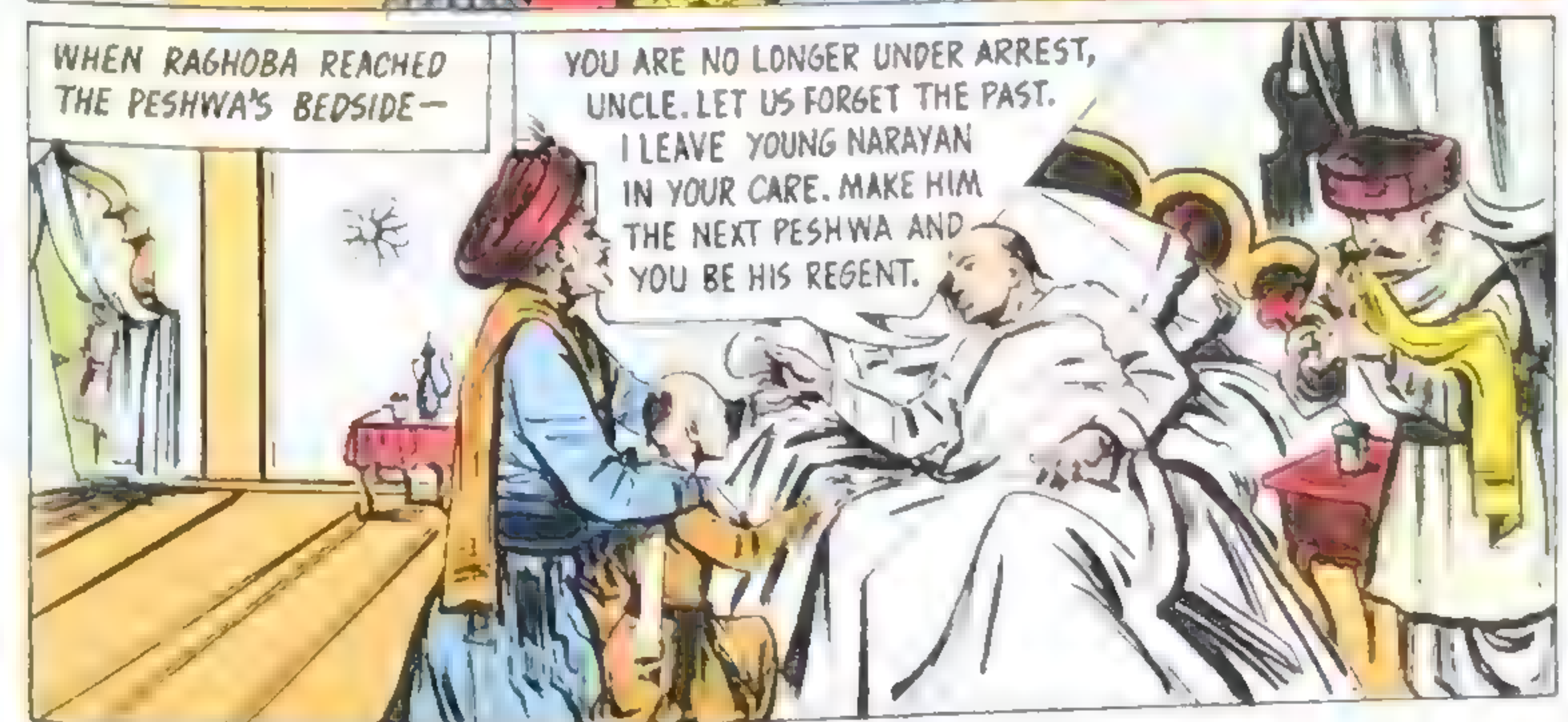
MY END IS NEAR. I WOULD LIKE TO SEE RAGHOBA.

I SHALL SEND FOR HIM.

RAGHOBA, ALSO KNOWN AS RAGHUNATH RAO, WAS THE PESHWA'S UNCLE. MADHAV RAO HAD TO PLACE HIM UNDER HOUSE ARREST BECAUSE HE AND HIS AMBITIOUS WIFE ANANDI WERE FOREVER PLOTTING AGAINST HIM.



THE PESHWA WANTS TO SEE YOU!



WHEN RAGHOBA REACHED THE PESHWA'S BEDSIDE—

YOU ARE NO LONGER UNDER ARREST, UNCLE. LET US FORGET THE PAST. I LEAVE YOUNG NARAYAN IN YOUR CARE. MAKE HIM THE NEXT PESHWA AND YOU BE HIS REGENT.



RAGHOBHA WAS DELIGHTED. HE CAME BACK TO ANANDI, JUBILANT.

I HAVE GOOD NEWS! WE ARE FREE. MADHAV RAO IS ABOUT TO DIE. NARAYAN WILL BECOME THE TITULAR PESHWA AND ALL THE POWER— IN MY HANDS!



THE THRONE MAKES A PESHWA, NOT POWER. NOW YOU DO THE DIRTY WORK SO THAT NARAYAN CAN ENJOY THE THRONE.



A FEW DAYS LATER RAGHOBHA CALLED ANANDIBAI TO HIM.

OH! DON'T WORRY. I HAVE MY OWN PLANS.



HERE! READ THIS AND YOU'LL UNDERSTAND ALL.



IT WAS TO ONE OF HIS SOLDIERS.

...AS AGREED BY US YOU WILL KIDNAP NARAYAN RAO. YOU WILL BE PAID...

KIDNAP INDEED! KILL SHOULD BE THE WORD.



THERE IS NO LIGHT HERE. I'LL GO OUT AND READ IT.



ANANDIBAI SOON RETURNED WITH THE LETTER.

EXCELLENT! WHY DON'T YOU PUT YOUR SEAL ON IT. I CAN DISPATCH IT RIGHT AWAY.



RAGHOBHA HAD NO IDEA THAT HE HAD PUT HIS SEAL ON A DEATH WARRANT.

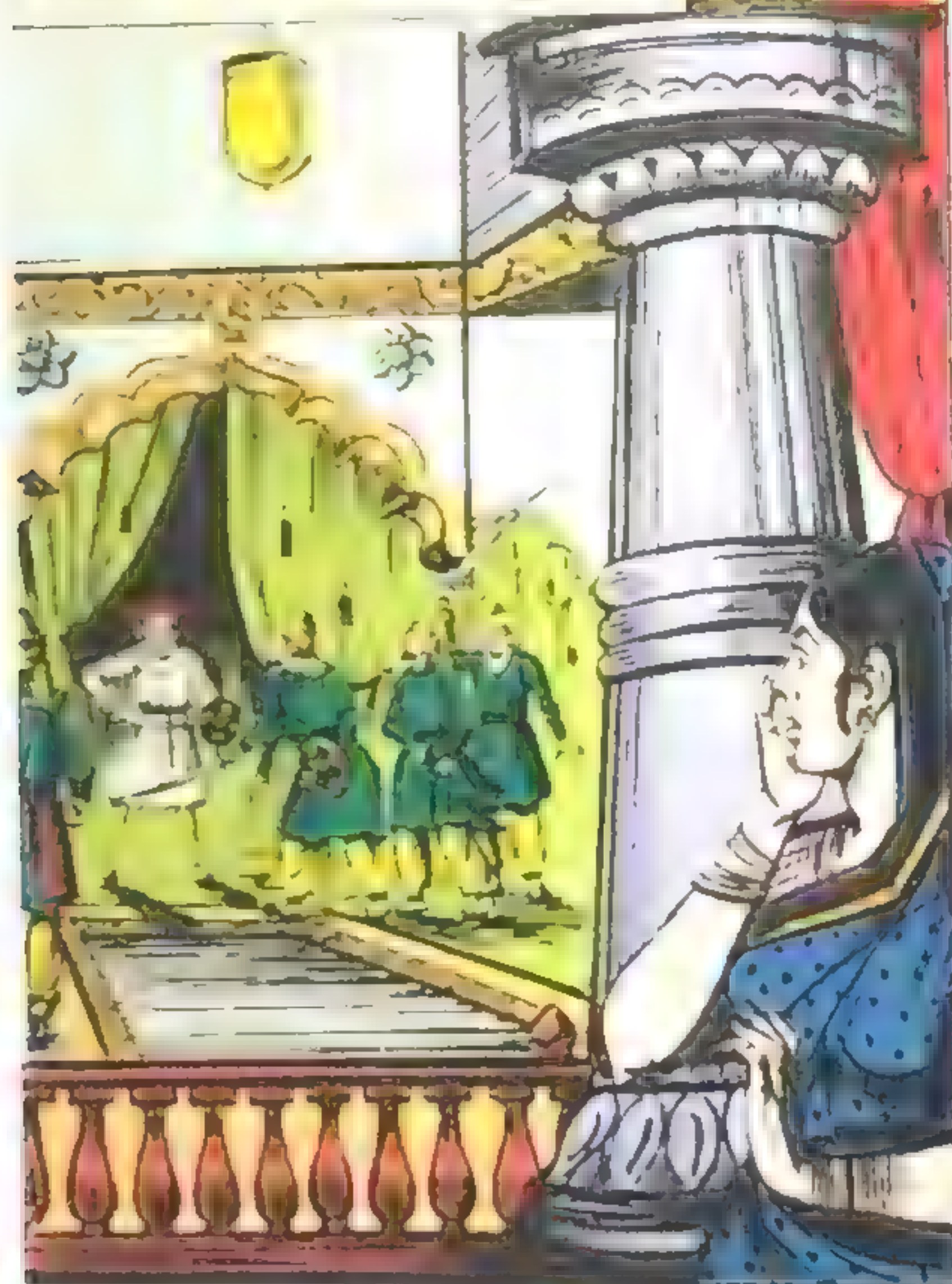
AS SOON AS RAGHOBHA'S SOLDIER GOT THE LETTER—

RAGHOBHA HAD TALKED OF KIDNAPPING... HE SEEMS TO HAVE CHANGED HIS MIND. WELL IT'S NONE OF MY BUSINESS. COME MY MEN, LET'S GO.





HE AND HIS MEN CHARGED INTO NARAYAN RAO'S ROOM—

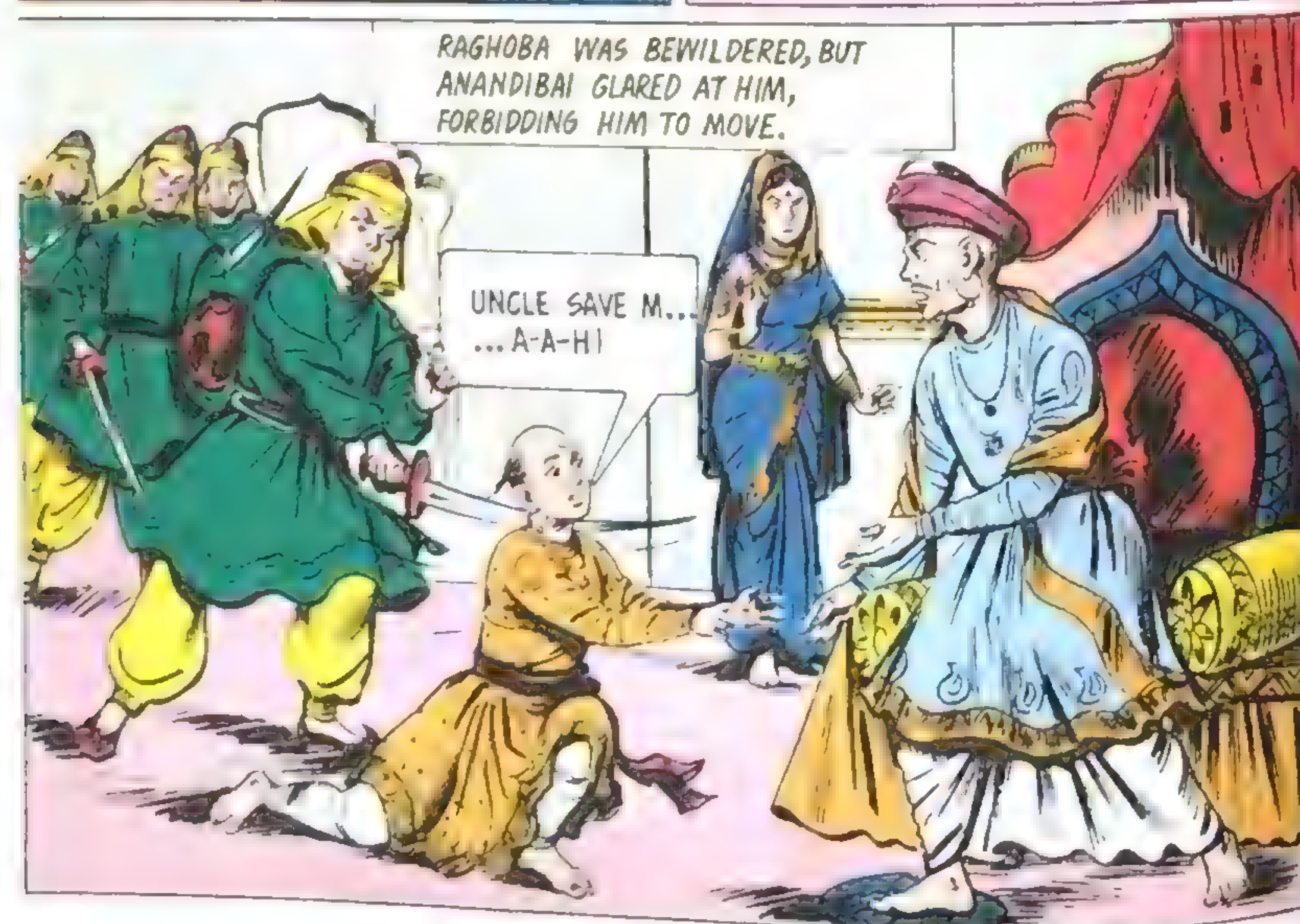


NARAYAN RAN TO RAGHOBA.



SAVE ME! UNCLE  
PLEASE SAVE ME!

RAGHOBA WAS BEWILDERED, BUT ANANDIBAI GLARED AT HIM, FORBIDDING HIM TO MOVE.



UNCLE SAVE M...  
... A-A-H!

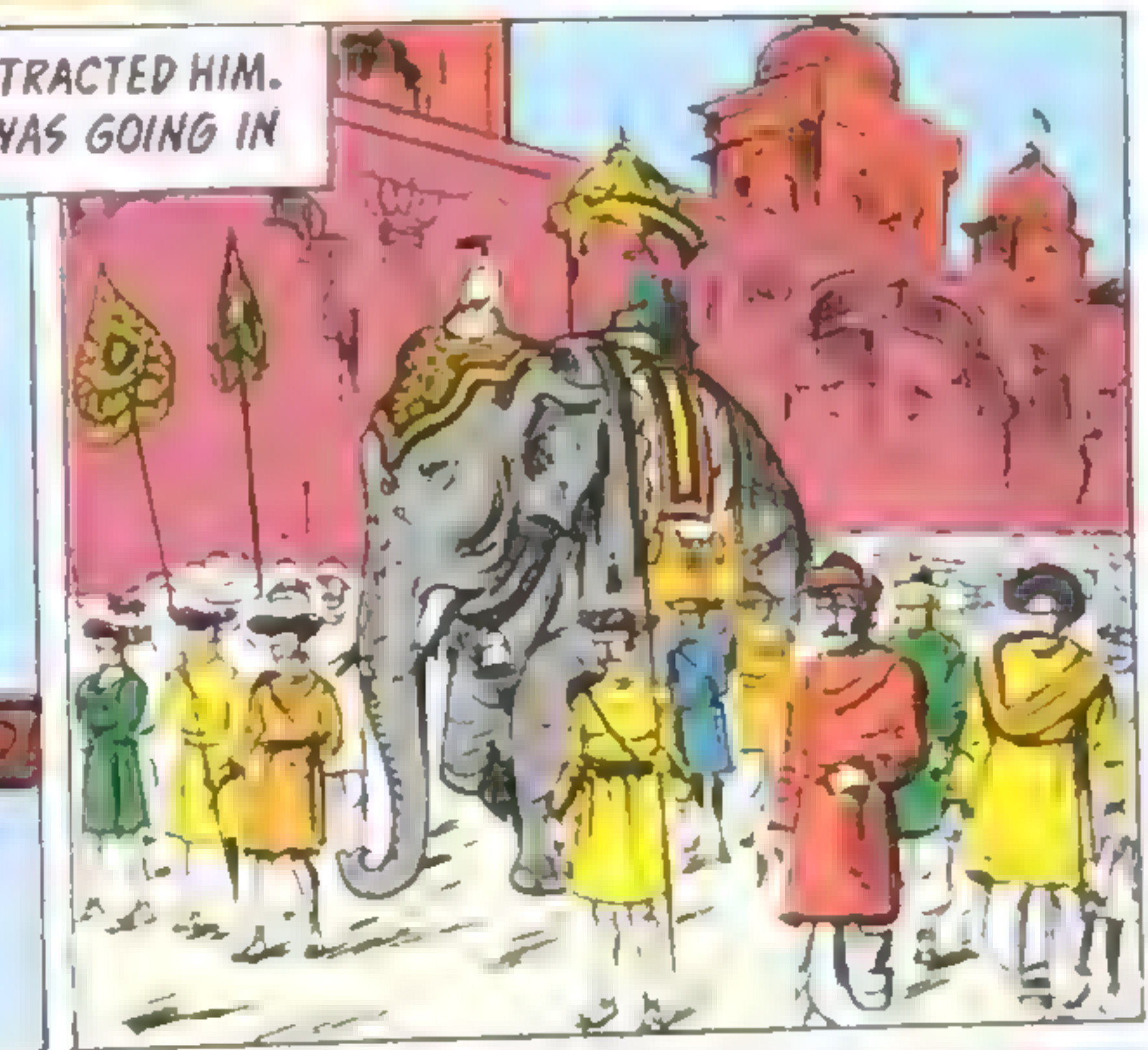
WHEN RAM SHASTRI LEARNT OF THE MURDER OF NARAYAN RAO IN BROAD DAYLIGHT, HE WAS AGHAST. HE PACED UP AND DOWN HIS ROOM.



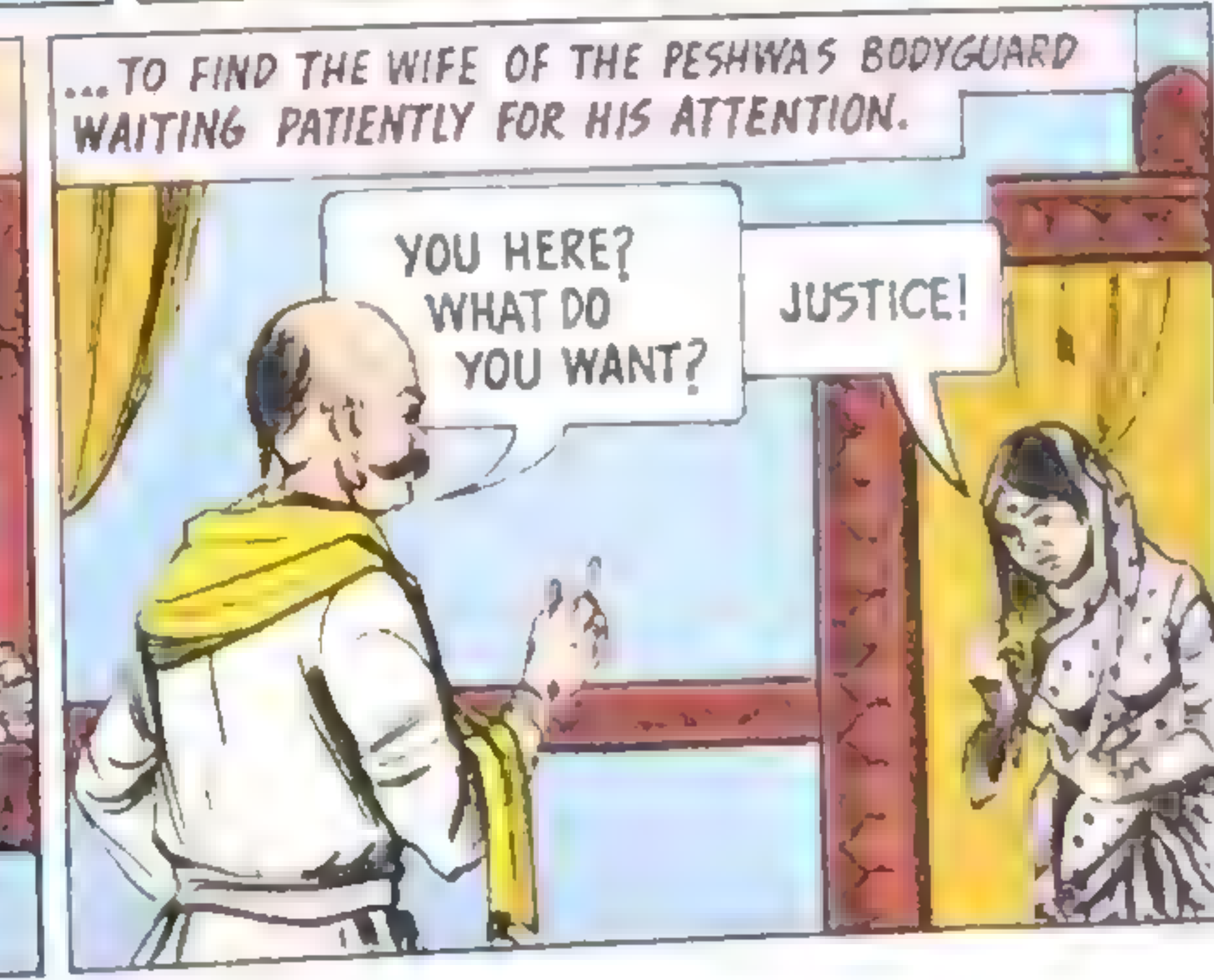
SUDDENLY A COMMOTION ON THE STREET DISTRACTED HIM. HE LOOKED OUT OF THE WINDOW. RAGHOBA WAS GOING IN PROCESSION TO THE DURBAR.



WHAT'S THAT?



UTTERLY DISGUSTED BY THE SIGHT, HE TURNED ROUND...

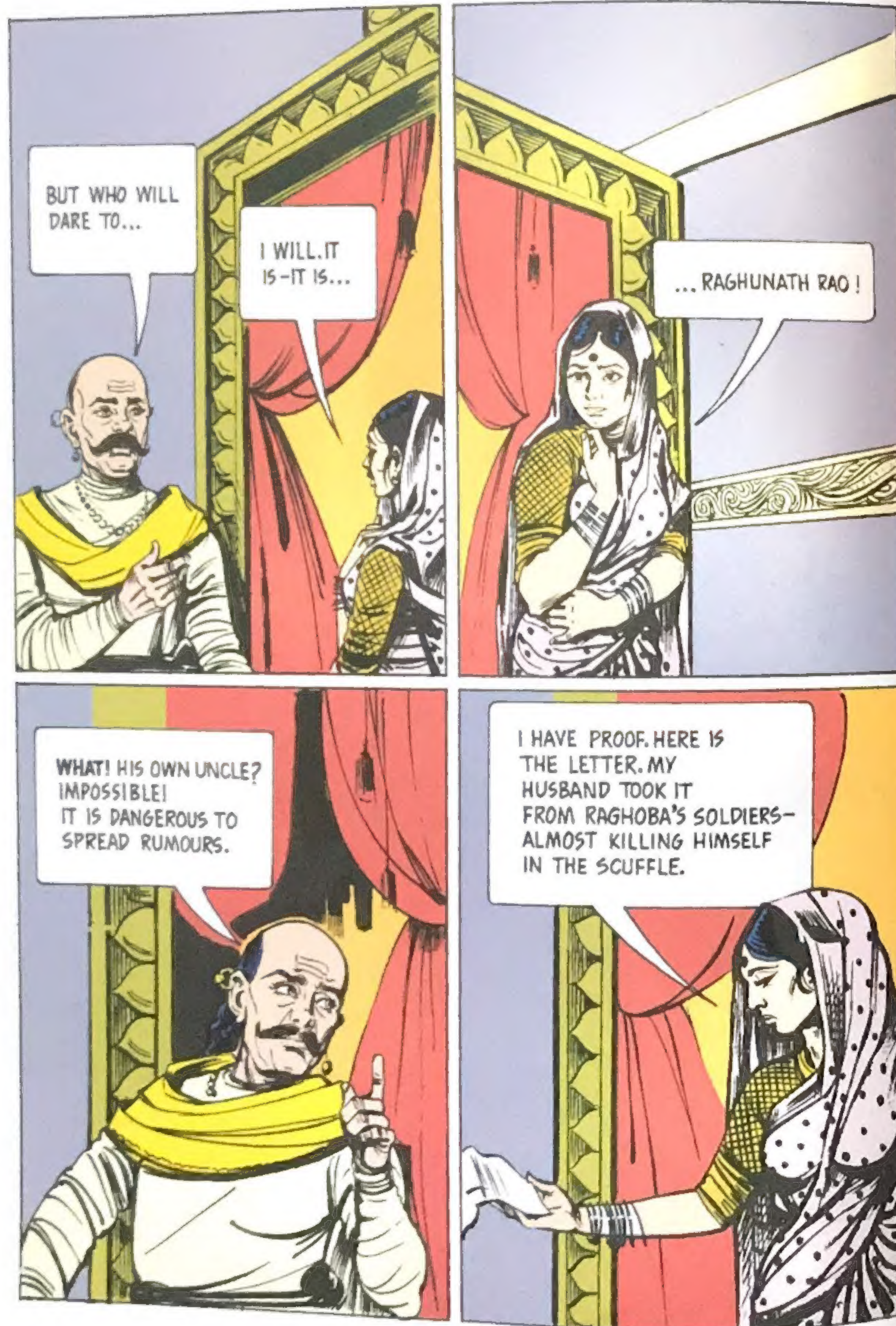


... TO FIND THE WIFE OF THE PESHWA'S BODYGUARD WAITING PATIENTLY FOR HIS ATTENTION.

YOU HERE?  
WHAT DO  
YOU WANT?

JUSTICE!





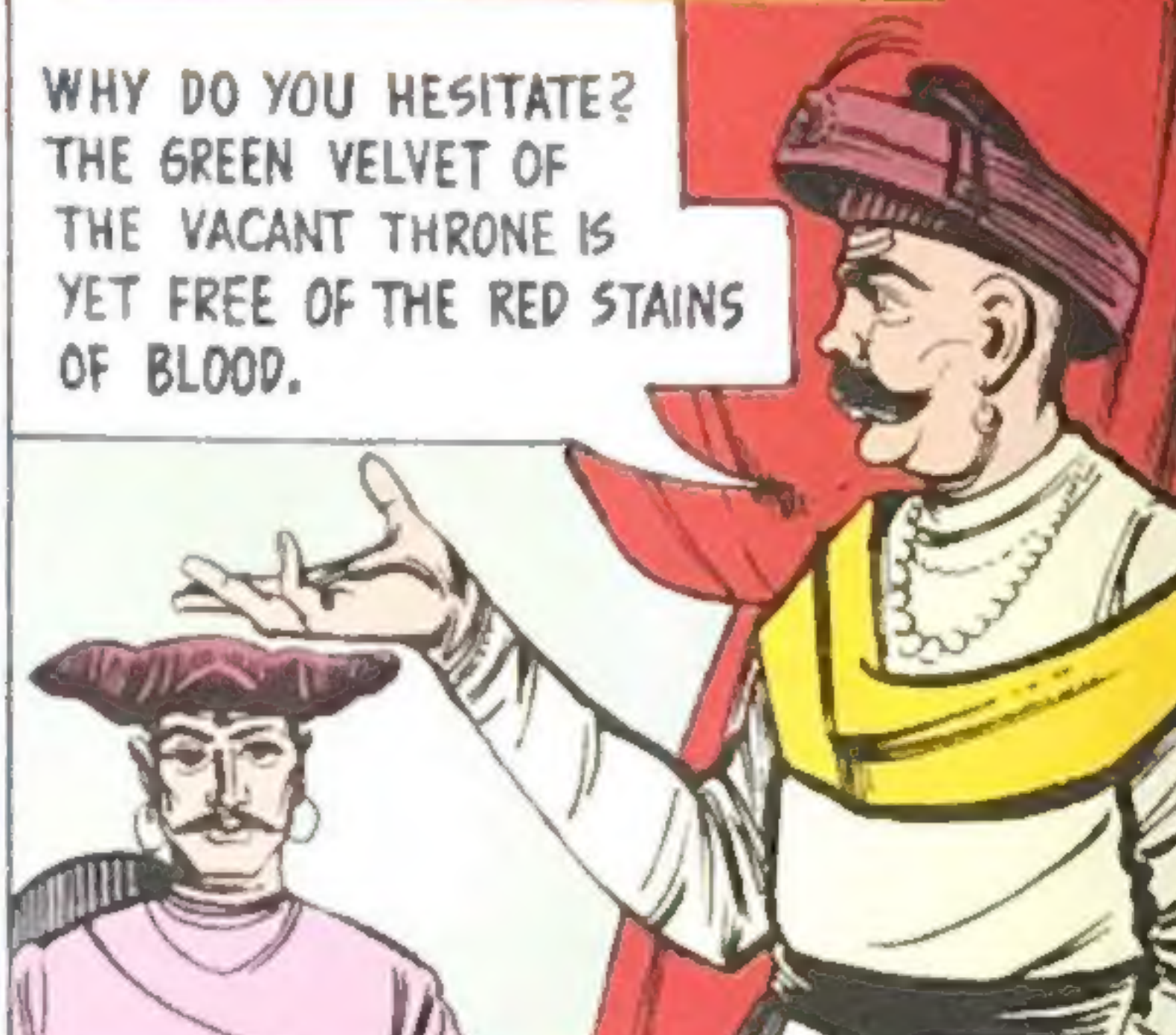




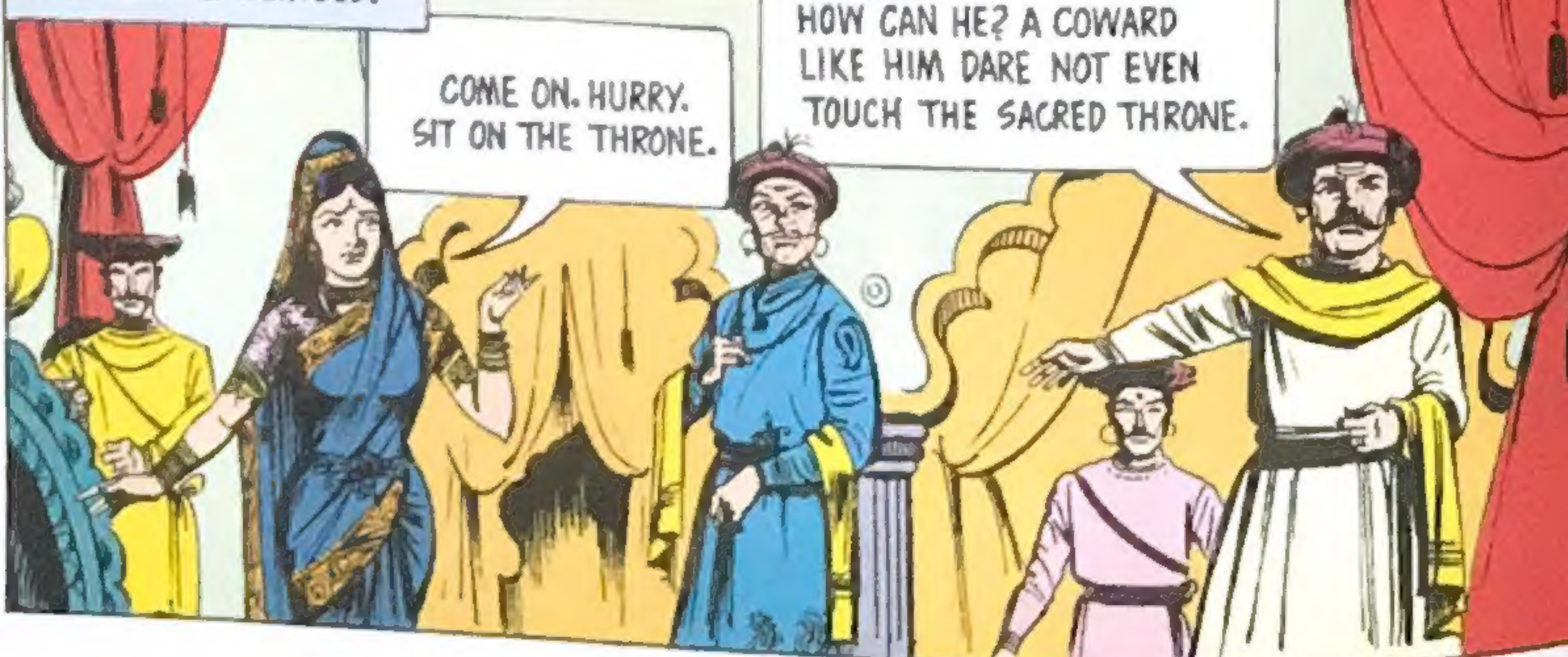
ANANDIBAI WAS IMPATIENT.



WHEN RAGHUNATH HESITATED—



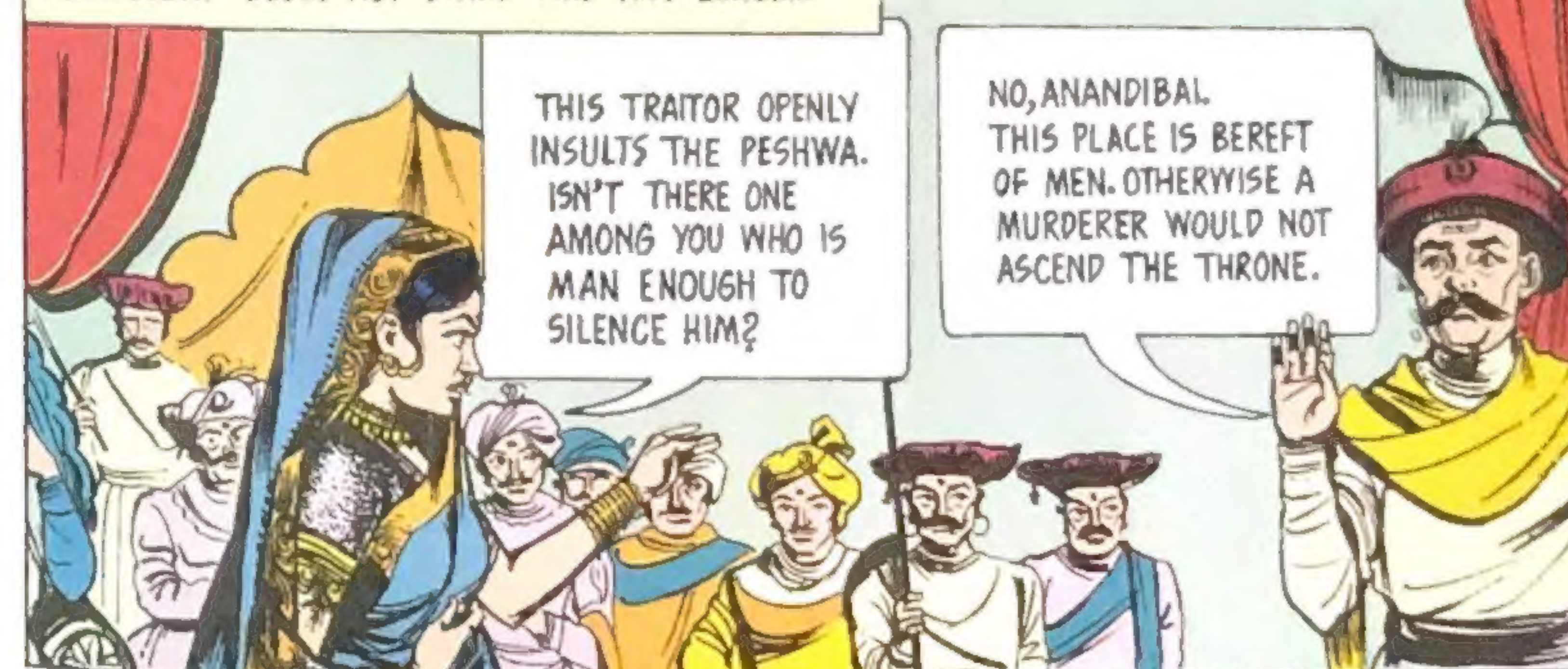
BY NOW ANANDIBAI SENSED THAT ALL WAS NOT WELL. SHE BECAME NERVOUS.



THE COURTIER'S WERE AGHAST.



ANANDIBAI COULD NOT STAND THIS ANY LONGER.



RAGHUNATH RAO WAS TERRIFIED.

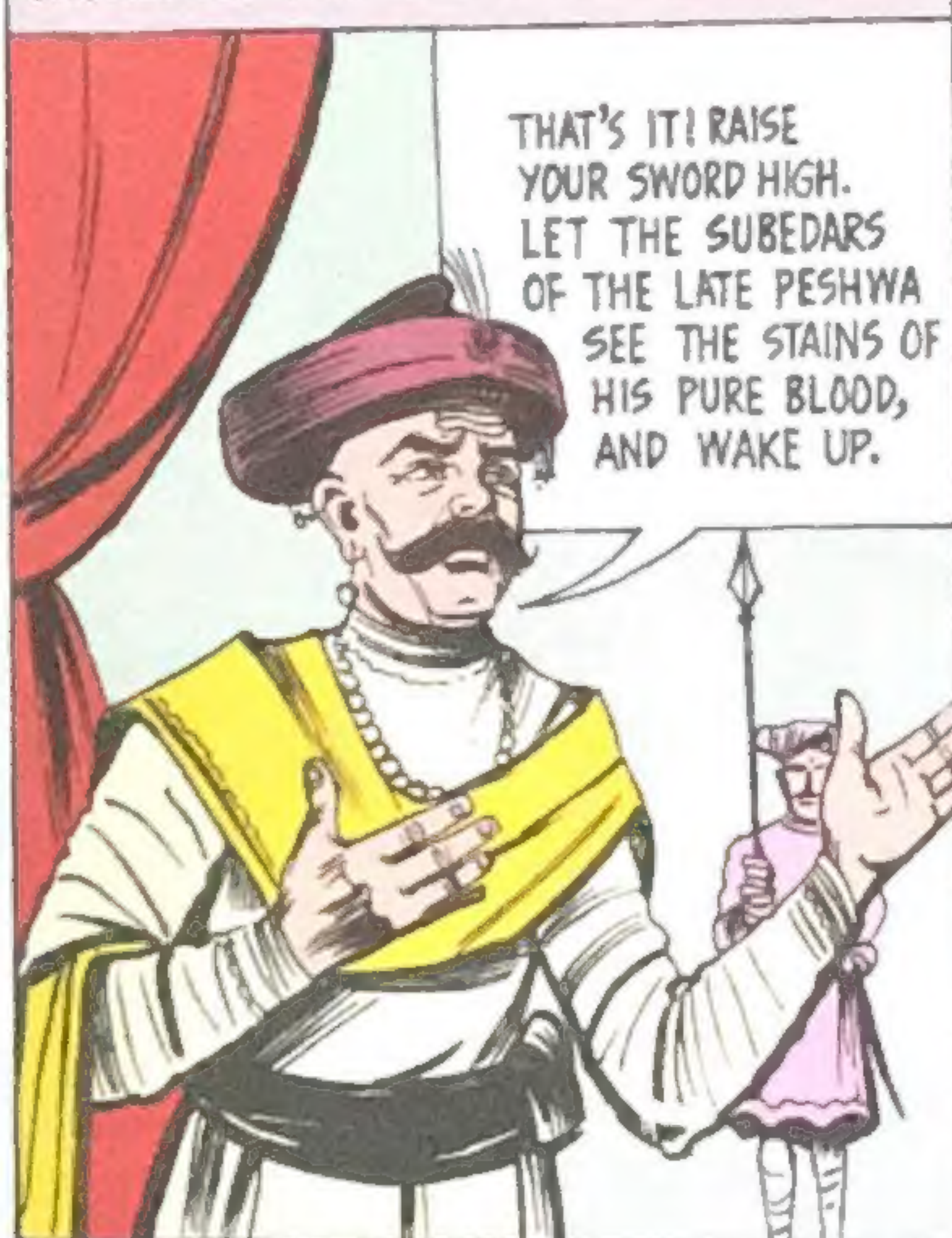


JUST THEN RAGHOBHA'S SOLDIER RUSHED TOWARDS RAM SHASTRI.





UNDAUNTED RAM SHASTRI STEPPED FORWARD.



THAT'S IT! RAISE YOUR SWORD HIGH. LET THE SUBEDARS OF THE LATE PESHWA SEE THE STAINS OF HIS PURE BLOOD, AND WAKE UP.

RAM SHASTRI PULLED OUT THE LETTER FROM HIS CUMMERBUND.



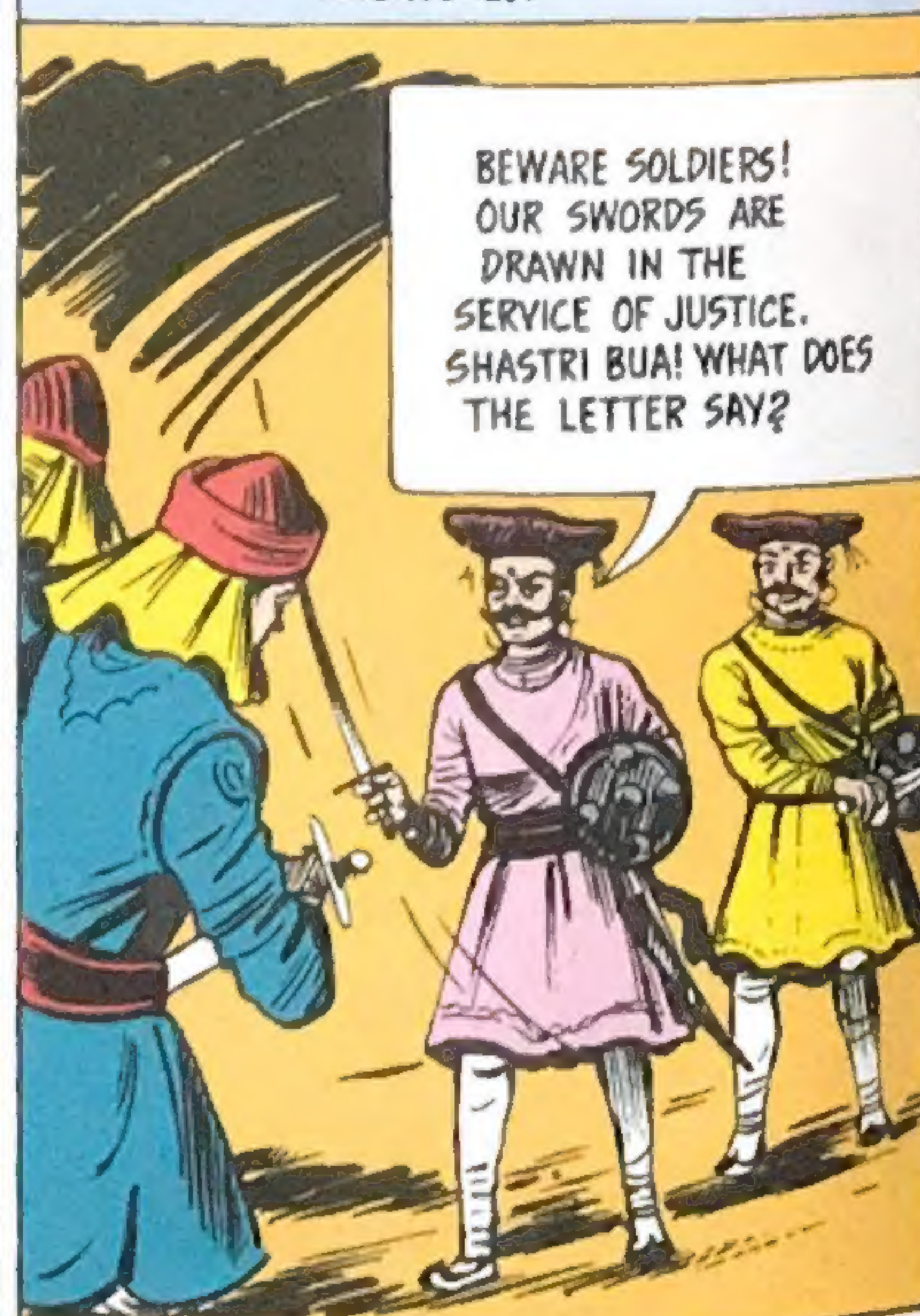
IN THIS LETTER I HAVE THE EVIDENCE OF YOUR GUILT. AND IT CARRIES THE SEAL OF RAGHOBA.

ANANDIBAI TURNED PALE WHEN SHE SAW THE LETTER. SHE TURNED TO THE SOLDIERS.

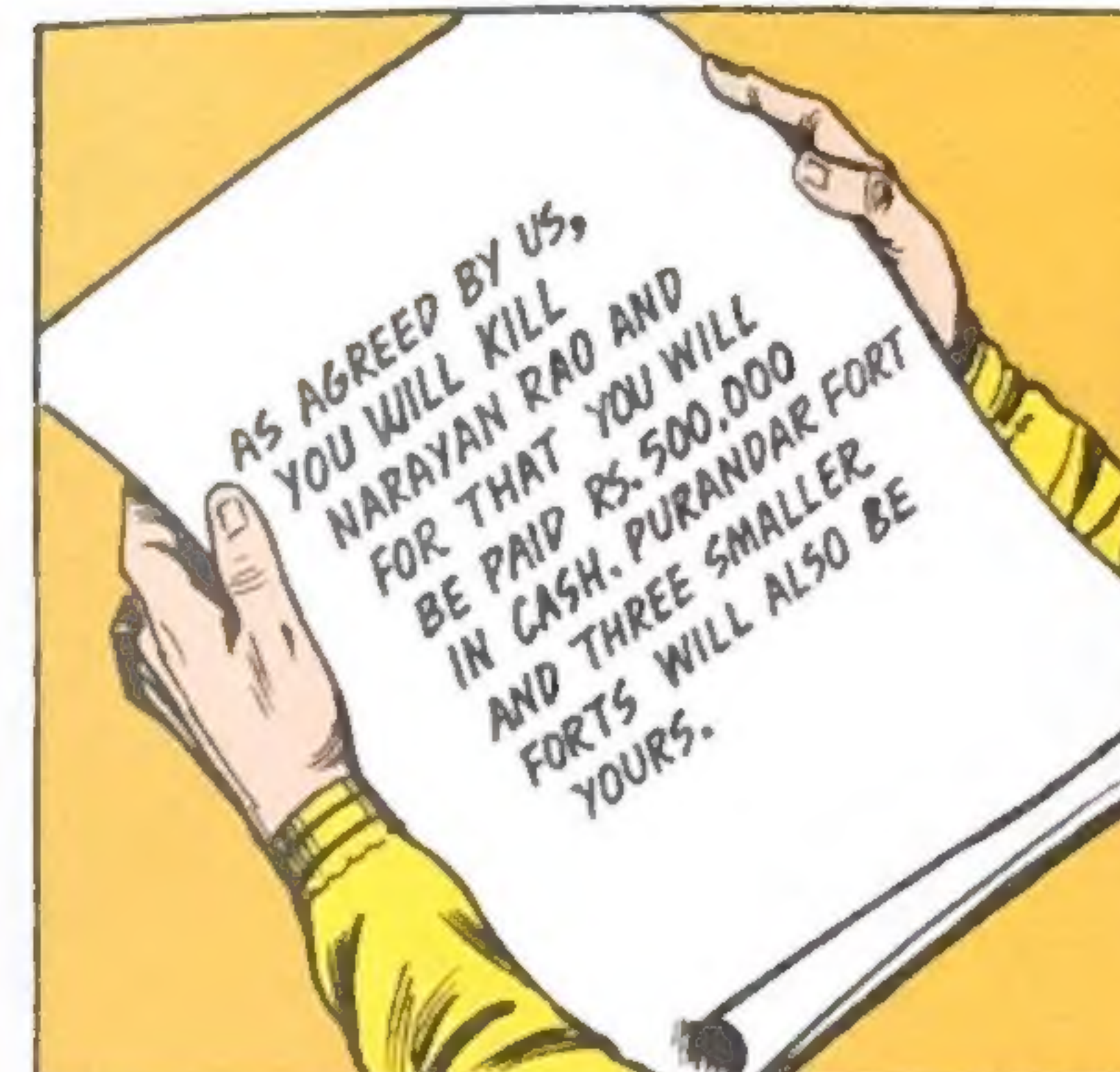


WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR? PUT HIM IN CHAINS.

AS THEY RUSHED FORWARD, TWO SUBEDARS INTERVENED.



BEWARE SOLDIERS! OUR SWORDS ARE DRAWN IN THE SERVICE OF JUSTICE. SHASTRI BUA! WHAT DOES THE LETTER SAY?

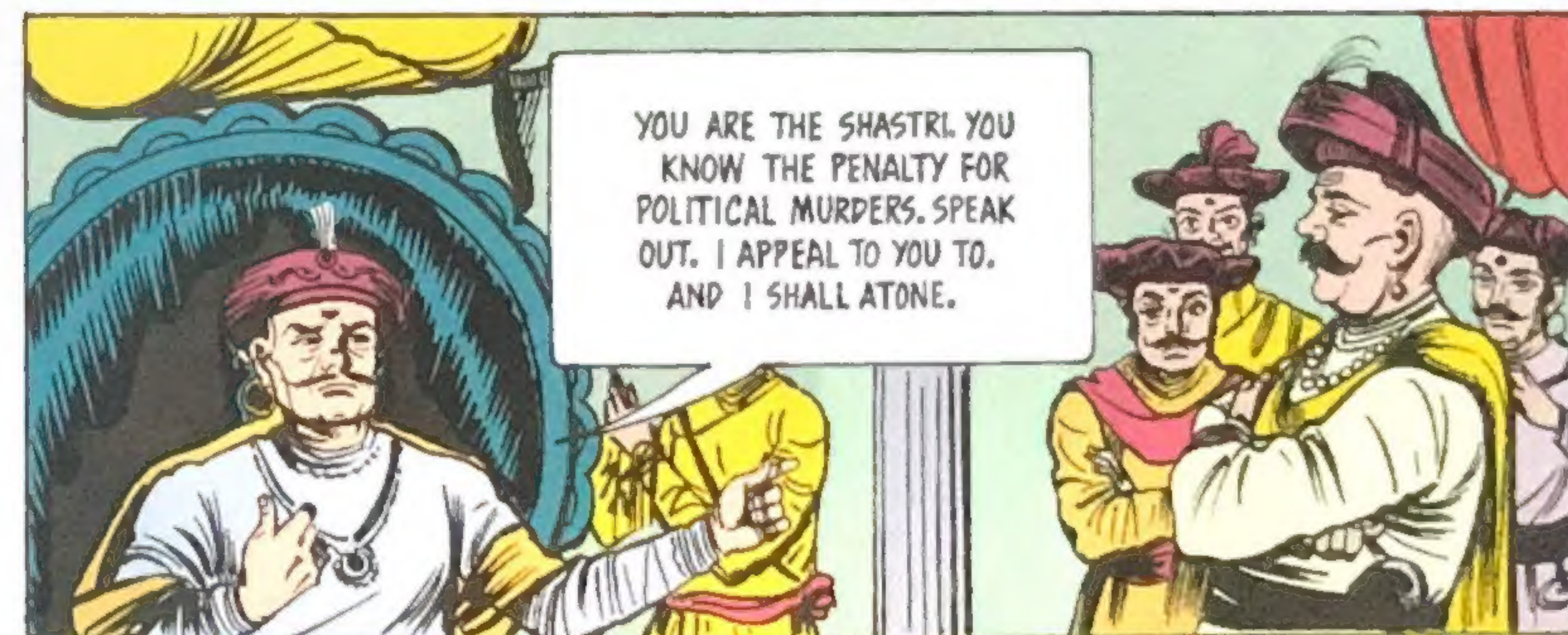


AS AGREED BY US, YOU WILL KILL NARAYAN RAO AND FOR THAT YOU WILL BE PAID RS. 500,000 IN CASH. PURANDAR FORT AND THREE SMALLER FORTS WILL ALSO BE YOURS.

FOR A MOMENT RAGHOBA WAS TONGUE-TIED. THEN-



RAM SHASTRI, NARAYAN RAO WAS A VICTIM OF POLITICS.



YOU ARE THE SHASTRI YOU KNOW THE PENALTY FOR POLITICAL MURDERS. SPEAK OUT. I APPEAL TO YOU TO, AND I SHALL ATONE.

THE COURTIER'S WERE IMPRESSED BY THE PESHWA'S WORDS, BUT NOT RAM SHASTRI.

FOR HIM THERE WAS NO COMPROMISE WHERE JUSTICE WAS CONCERNED.



FOR A MURDERER THERE IS ONLY ONE PENALTY. DEATH.



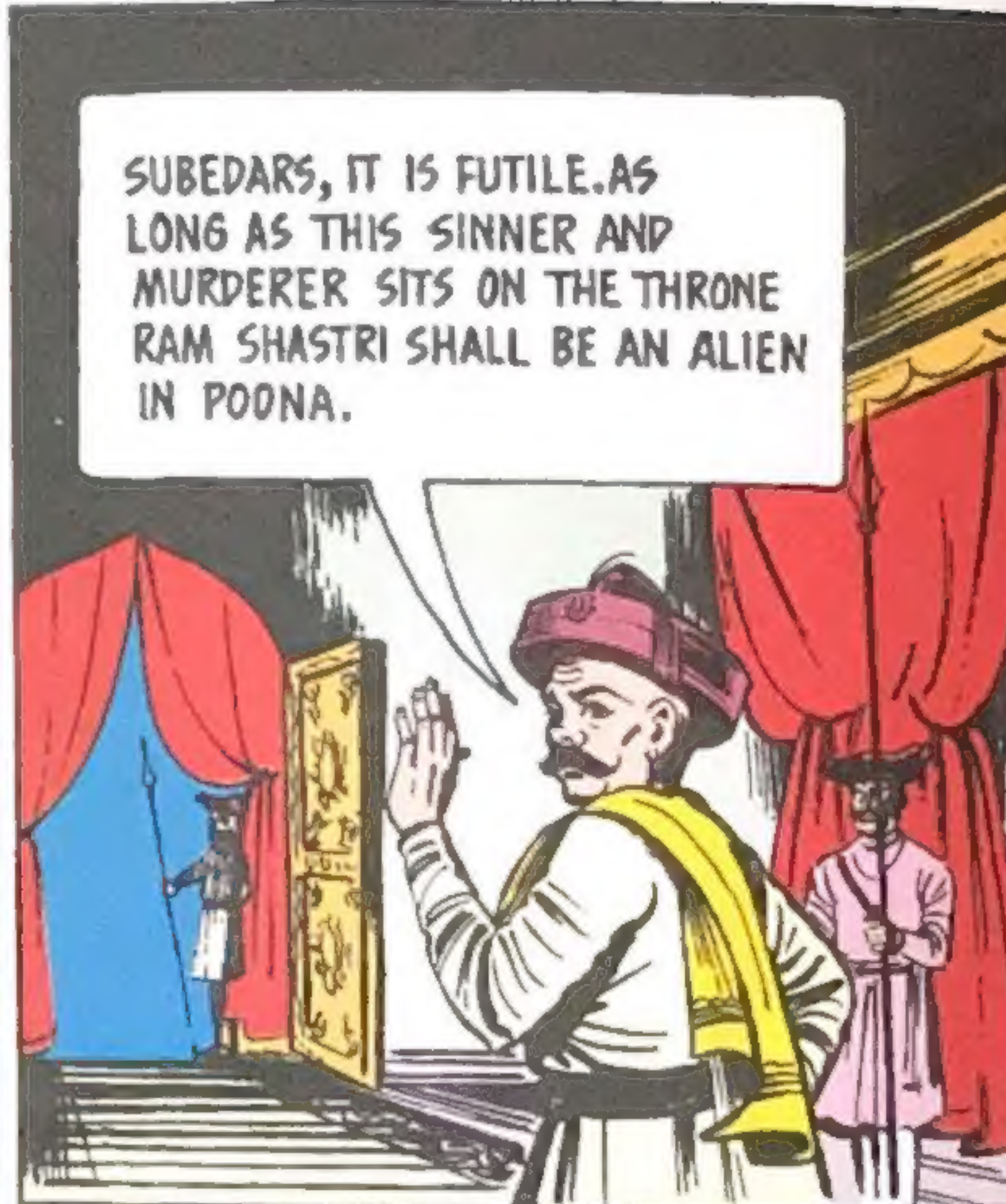
SOLDIERS! CHAIN THE TRAITOR.



BUT—



AHA! ONE STEP MORE  
AND YOU WILL  
BE DEAD!



SUBEDARS, IT IS FUTILE. AS  
LONG AS THIS SINNER AND  
MURDERER SITS ON THE THRONE  
RAM SHASTRI SHALL BE AN ALIEN  
IN POONA.



RAM SHASTRI, YOU HAVE  
BEEN TRULY LOYAL TO  
THE LATE PESHWAS. THE  
FIRST SALUTE OF THE DAY  
SHALL BE TO YOU.

I AM HONOURED.  
I SHALL RETURN, BUT ONLY  
WHEN THE THRONE SHAKES  
OFF THE MURDERER!

TRUE TO HIS WORD RAM SHASTRI LEFT POONA, AND RETURNED ONLY  
WHEN THE POSTHUMOUS SON OF NARAYAN RAO - SAWAI  
MADHAV RAO - WAS BORN AND WAS MADE THE PESHWA. FROM THEN  
ONWARDS HE WAS THE CHIEF JUSTICE TILL THE END OF HIS DAYS.

## WHICH OF THE ACKs HAVE YOU STILL NOT READ?

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Bheeshma  
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Dasharatha  
Dhruva And Ashtavakra  
Draupadi  
Drona  
Elephanta  
Gandhari  
Ganesha  
Ganesha And The Moon  
Ganga  
Garuda  
Ghatotkacha  
Hanuman  
Hanuman To The Rescue  
Harischandra  
Heroes Of Hampi  
Indra And Shachi  
Indra And Shibi  
Indra And Vritra  
Jagannatha Of Puri  
Jayadratha  
Kacha And Devayani  
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Kartikeya  
Konark  
Krishna  
Krishna And Jarasandha  
Krishna And Narakasura  
Krishna And Rukmini  
Krishna And Shishupala  
Krishna And The False  
Vaasudeva  
Kubera  
Kumbhakarna  
Mahabharata  
Mahiravana  
Nachiketa  
Nahusha  
Naia Damayanti  
Pareekshit  
Parashurama  
Prabhavati  
Pradyumna  
Prahlaad  
Purushottam Dev And  
Padmavati  
Rama  
Ravana Humbled  
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Savitri  
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Tales Of Narada

Tales Of Shiva  
Tales Of Vishnu  
Tales Of Yudhishtira  
Tapati  
Thanjavur  
The Churning Of The  
Ocean  
The Gita  
The Golden Mongoose  
The King In  
A Parrot's Body  
The Lord Of Lanka  
The Pandava Princes  
The Pandavas In Hiding  
The Parijata Tree  
The Sons Of Rama  
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Tripura  
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Dayananda  
Deshbandhu  
Chittaranjan Das  
Eknath  
Fa Hien  
Ghanshyamdas Birla  
Guru Arjan  
Guru Gobind Singh  
Guru Har Gobind  
Guru Nanak  
Guru Tegh Bahadur  
Hiuen Tsang  
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Jamsetji Tata  
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The Deadly Feast  
The Giant And  
The Dwarf  
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True Friends  
Kanwal And Kehar  
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The Adventures  
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The Adventures Of  
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The Celestial Necklace  
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The Cowherd Of Alawi  
The Fearless Boy  
The Fool's Disciples  
The Golden Sand  
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The Unhappy Tiger  
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The Lost Prince  
The Magic Grove  
The Miraculous Conch  
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Hemu  
Humayun  
Jahangir  
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Kochunni  
Krishnadeva Raya  
Kunwar Singh  
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